

February 9, 1998

De Niro caged in former Bond house

OS ANGELES — The sight of a man in a cage, a man who has been in the cage for 10 years, is a sight that is not often seen. The cage is a cage for a man who has been in the cage for 10 years. The cage is a cage for a man who has been in the cage for 10 years.

Twins celebrate birthday in New York

BRIGHTON — The twins, who were born on the same day, celebrated their birthday in New York. The twins, who were born on the same day, celebrated their birthday in New York.

Nagano hangs on for the game

SAPO — The game was a game that was played in the city of Nagano. The game was a game that was played in the city of Nagano.

Chinese doctor swallowed

BEIJING — A Chinese doctor was swallowed. The doctor was a doctor who was swallowed.

Spaniard may have taken part in ticket to grave

MADRID — A Spaniard may have taken part in a ticket to a grave. The Spaniard may have taken part in a ticket to a grave.

Iraqi Kurdish leaders visit Iran

TEHRAN (APF) — Several Iraqi Kurdish leaders, including Jalal Talabani, head of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), are in Iran to discuss the situation in Kurdish-controlled northern Iraq, a newspaper reported Monday. The English-language daily Tehran Times said the officials arrived Sunday and that they would also take part in ceremonies marking the 19th anniversary of the 1979 Islamic Revolution on Wednesday. Mr. Talabani and other Kurdish officials are to hold talks with Iranian officials on the situation in northern Iraq, it said. The paper identified another visiting Kurdish official as Fazel Mirani of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) led by Massoud Barzani. The KDP and PUK have been in conflict over power-sharing in northern Iraq, which they have controlled since the 1991 Gulf war in defiance of Baghdad and under U.S. and allied protection.

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published by the Jordan Press Foundation

جوردان تايمز يومية سياسية مستقلة عن المؤسسة الصحفية الأردنية - الراية

Al Azhar calls on Muslims to defend Iraq

CAIRO (APF) — Cairo-based Al Azhar, the highest authority in Sunni Islam, called for Muslims to risk their lives to defend the Iraqi people if the United States attacks them. "We are opposed to any aggression against the Muslim Iraqi people... and must rally to their side and lay down our lives and our fortunes to defend them," Al Azhar leader Sheikh Muhammad Sayyid Tantawi said in remarks published Monday by the Egyptian weekly Al Ushua. "The United States is carrying out a policy that is tough with one side and gentle with the other. It is unfair to Iraq but aligns itself with Israel. But it is necessary to adopt a single criterion, that of justice, whereby all countries are treated on an equal footing," the sheikh said. "Washington takes it upon itself to decide unilaterally on an attack against Iraq with no mandate from the United Nations. Any unjust aggression goes against international legislation and monotheistic religions," he added.

King, Queen back home

AMMAN (J.T.) — Their Majesties King Hussein and Queen Noor returned home Monday concluding a several day visit to the United Kingdom. While in London, King Hussein held talks with U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and British Prime Minister Tony Blair on the latest developments in the Middle East region. Upon arrival at the airport, Their Majesties were received by His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, Royal family members and senior civil and military officials.

Shevardnadze survives assassination attempt

TBILISI (APF) — Georgian President Eduard Shevardnadze Monday survived an assassination attempt in the centre of the capital Tbilisi, the Iprinda news agency reported. The former Soviet foreign minister survived after his convoy came under attack from grenade-launchers, the agency said. The president's bodyguards quickly evacuated him from the scene. A journalist said a gunfire exchange went on for several minutes at the location of the attack.

Qatari emir visits Saudi Arabia

JEDDAH (APF) — Qatar's emir, Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al Thani, arrived in Saudi Arabia on Monday for talks with King Fahd on the Iraq crisis. Qatar's ambassador to the kingdom, Ali Al Mahmoud, told AFP the two leaders would discuss the latest moves in the crisis over U.N. inspections of Iraq's arms arsenals.

Fatchett to visit Cairo Thursday

CAIRO (APF) — Britain's Junior Foreign Minister Derek Fatchett is due here Thursday for meetings on ways to restart the Israeli-Arab peace process, an Egyptian foreign ministry official said Monday. "During his one-day visit, Mr. Fatchett will study with (Egyptian) Foreign Minister Amr Musa the latest developments in the peace process and Cairo's efforts to break deadlocks in it," said Fathi Al Shazli, deputy minister for European affairs.

GCC ministers to hold talks on Iraq this week

MUSCAT (R) — The foreign ministers of the six-nation Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) will hold an extraordinary meeting this week to discuss the crisis between Iraq and the United Nations, the official Oman news agency said on Monday. The agency said it had learned the foreign ministers of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar and Oman were due to meet in Kuwait on Wednesday.

Likud Party nominates rival candidate for Israeli president

TEL AVIV (APF) — Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's Likud Party nominated Shaul Amor Monday to stand against incumbent Ezer Weizman in elections next month for the post of Israeli president. Likud members of parliament selected their fellow deputy to run against Mr. Weizman in the March 4 parliamentary vote by secret ballot, party officials said. Mr. Amor, 47, an immigrant from Morocco who serves as mayor of a small town in northern Israel, is generally given little chance of defeating the popular Weizman.

Jordan will not support military action against Iraq — Monarch

'I have found myself more than once predicting what is going to happen and warning about it, but when it does occur, we bear the consequences'

AMMAN (J.T.) — His Majesty King Hussein on Monday said that Jordan does not support a military strike on Iraq because it will affect the Iraqi people, a dilemma other Arab leaders face.

"I don't think that I am in a position to support action that might affect the people of Iraq and I think that it is a dilemma that everybody faces. The people have suffered enough and continue to suffer. I hope that it will never happen. But at the same time, I can realise the dynamics of the situation and therefore I am suggesting everything to be done to avoid it and that includes a suggestion to the Iraqi leadership to come forth with regard to all agreements and implement them."

The King also warned that "the situation is critical and requires all possible efforts to prevent a new military confrontation," stressing "that Iraq has to fully implement U.N. Security Council resolutions."

Speaking after a meeting with British Prime Minister



His Majesty King Hussein and British Prime Minister Tony Blair leave Downing Street after a meeting Monday (Reuters photo)

(Continued on page 7)

Annan cancels Middle East tour, denies plans for trip to Baghdad

Iraq launches diplomatic offensive on Arab front amidst British claims Iraq may have large quantities of Agent 15

Combined agency dispatches

U.N. SECRETARY-GENERAL Kofi Annan on Monday cancelled at the last minute a planned 10-day Middle East tour and said he had "no plans at present" to travel to Baghdad.

Mr. Annan explained to journalists as he entered the U.N. building that his presence was required in New York during the continuing showdown with Iraq over weapons inspections.

Mr. Annan had been scheduled to depart Tuesday on visits to Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Israel and the Palestinian self-rule Gaza Strip, returning to New York on Feb. 21. He was to have made a stopover in Rome on the way to Cairo.

Arab diplomatic sources in Jordan said earlier Monday that Mr. Annan had decided to remain in New York.

The U.N. chief also denied that he planned to travel to Baghdad, following an announcement by Russian President Boris Yeltsin in Rome that he would do so.

Russia has been pressing Mr. Annan to go to Baghdad to negotiate an end to the U.N.-Iraq crisis by flying to the Iraqi capital. But Mr. Annan said Monday: "I have no plans at the moment to go to Baghdad."

Mr. Annan noted that he was in touch with all the parties concerned, with governments which had sent envoys to Iraq, and in some cases with the envoys directly, as well as with the Iraqi authorities.

"I think the discussions and the search for a diplomatic solution has reached a critical stage and my presence is needed here," he said.

"So I'm going to stay here and work with all concerned in search for a diplomatic

Turkey denies fresh incursion into Iraq

ANKARA (APF) — Turkey Monday denied allegations that thousands of its troops had entered neighbouring northern Iraq amid the latest Iraqi crisis.

"There is no such thing," foreign ministry spokesman Necati Utkan told reporters here when asked if there had been a Turkish military incursion into northern Iraq.

Quoting unnamed sources, two Turkish private television stations reported Sunday and Monday that nearly 7,000 Turkish troops had entered northern Iraq to take measures against a possible

(Continued on page 7)

U.S. denies plans for Kurdish state in Iraq

ANKARA (APF) — The United States Monday denied claims by Turkey's nationalist Deputy Premier Bulent Ecevit that Washington wanted to create a Kurdish state in northern Iraq following a possible attack against Baghdad.

"The United States has supported the preservation of Iraq's territorial integrity and this support is continuing," a private Turkish television station quoted U.S. Ambassador in Ankara Mark Parris as saying.

"The United States is not backing any separatist movement in Iraq, and this includes a Kurdish state," Mr. Parris told the NTV station.

Mr. Ecevit charged Sunday that the ongoing U.S. showdown with Iraq was designed to control world oil prices and set up a Kurdish state in northern Iraq.

"I don't believe that a superpower like the United States doesn't have a plan for after the war," Mr. Ecevit told reporters here.

"The United States wants to divide Iraq to create a Kurdistan satellite state under its control," he said, claiming that Washington has had such an objective since the 1991 Gulf war.

"My impression is that the United States has the goal of creating a Kurdistan, dividing Iraq and in such a way controlling the price of petrol," he said.

Mr. Ecevit's remarks once again pointed to dissent within the Turkish government on how to handle the Iraqi crisis.

Mr. Ecevit, who in the

(Continued on page 7)

Crown Prince, Cousseran discuss means to resolve Iraqi crisis

By Tareq Ayyoub
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan on Monday met with French foreign ministry official, Jean-Claude Cousseran, and discussed with him efforts to resolve the Iraq-U.N. crisis through diplomatic means.

The Crown Prince stressed the need to give the French initiative a chance to overcome the tension following U.S. threats to launch a military strike against Iraq as a result of Baghdad's refusal to grant U.N. inspectors free access to enter presidential palaces.

During the meeting, Prince Hassan reiterated the Kingdom's position that the crisis should be resolved peacefully and the need to avoid military action "which neither Iraq nor the region can absorb."

The Crown Prince also stressed the necessity for Iraq to comply with U.N. resolutions.

Mr. Cousseran, who arrived here from Beirut, was among a

Tarawneh warns against U.S. rejection of Russian initiative

AMMAN (J.T.) — Minister of Foreign Affairs Faysal Tarawneh warned Monday that U.S. rejection of the Russian peace initiative to end the Iraqi crisis peacefully will make the military option inevitable.

Dr. Tarawneh told Al Rai Arabic daily that Jordan hopes the French efforts will succeed in reaching a peaceful breakthrough to the deadlock. He described the situation that prevails in the region as "ambiguous."

"It is not known how far the military strike will go. The danger of dividing Iraq is a threat to all regional countries," said the minister. "We in Jordan are against this because we are for the unity of Iraqi territories." Dr. Tarawneh confirmed that Saudi Arabia has agreed to supply Jordan with oil in case the Iraqi supplies are cut off as a result of a military strike.

four-man team, led by the secretary-general of the French foreign ministry, Bertrand Dufourcq, visiting Baghdad last week.

A French diplomat told the Jordan Times on Sunday that Mr. Dufourcq will submit a report to French President Jacques Chirac following his return to Paris.

France, which opposes military action against Iraq, was expected to submit to the U.N.

'Rawabdeh resigned NCP'

AMMAN (J.T.) — Abdul Rauf Rawabdeh, the second man in the National Constitutional Party (NCP) has recently resigned, party sources told the Jordan Times.

Mr. Rawabdeh, who was the party's deputy secretary general, ran on the party ticket for the November elections and won one of Irbid's seven seats in the current Parliament.

The NCP has been plagued by divisions and resignations since it was formed by the

merger of 10 smaller parties, including Mr. Rawabdeh's Yaqazah (Awakening) Party.

The party fielded 11 of its leaders for the November elections but only two made it to the 80-member Lower House. Mr. Rawabdeh and the party's secretary general, Abdul Hadi Majali.

Touted by the tabloid media as the "party of the regime," the NCP was one of the main reasons leading to the Islamist opposition boycott of the elec-

EU chief tells Israel, PNA to stop stalling implementation of accords

GAZA CITY (APF) — EU Commission President Jacques Santer met with Palestinian President Yasser Arafat Monday and called on Israeli and Palestinian leaders alike to stop evading full implementation of their peace agreements.

"We are disappointed and concerned by the lack of progress in the peace process and that is why I think I can ask with great insistence for all parties to honour their commitments," Mr. Santer told reporters after his talks with Mr. Arafat.

"We demand that Israel's security be guaranteed, and at the same time believe that the best guarantee for Israel's security is to promote the

economic development of Palestine," he said as Mr. Arafat looked on.

Mr. Santer met Sunday with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu as part of a tour of the region to boost the European Union (EU) role in the Mideast peace process.

Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations have been stalled for nearly a year, with Israel refusing to carry out promised troop withdrawals from more occupied land and Islamists pursuing violent attacks against the Jewish state.

Mr. Netanyahu has made pursuit of the peace process conditional on toughened Palestinian action against the

(Continued on page 7)

NATO chief faces unwelcome Bosnia-Iraq linkage by U.S.

By Douglas Hamilton
Reuters

BRUSSELS — NATO Secretary-General Javier Solana travels to Washington this week facing an unexpected threat of linkage between U.S. support for NATO peacekeeping in Bosnia and European backing for U.S. policy on Iraq.

It comes from influential U.S. senators, who raised eyebrows at a weekend conference in Munich by forcefully tying their support for the Bosnia mission to Europe's readiness to endorse force in the standoff with Iraqi President Saddam Hussein.

The blunt display of arm-twisting was not joined by U.S. Secretary of Defence William Cohen, who also attended the conference on

international security.

But it capped a week of uphill, public and at times frustrating U.S. efforts to elicit allied, particularly Arab, support for the use of force in Iraq — an option with nothing like the support Washington enjoyed in the 1990 Gulf crisis.

According to one German commentator, the Americans had come to the annual Munich gathering with "a clear will to talk more plainly to their European allies than ever before."

If American troops were needed in Bosnia to help the allies uphold Western values, face a common challenge, and promote a common goal, then why was the United States standing alone on Iraq?

German Chancellor Helmut Kohl, who addressed the conference, faced such a withering barrage of American criticism that he slipped an unscripted promise of support for U.S. policy into his prepared speech.

Diplomatic sources at NATO headquarters in Brussels on Monday said the senatorial tough talk had created unexpected wrinkles for Mr. Solana's three-day visit, at precisely the time when NATO's major programmes seemed well on track.

Mr. Solana was expected to have talks with Congressional leaders and Secretary of State Madeleine Albright among others.

His visit, from Wednesday until Friday, coincides

(Continued on page 7)

Israel asking employers to hire more Palestinians instead of foreign workers

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — Israeli authorities have taken a series of measures to convince employers to replace foreign labourers with Palestinians from the occupied territories, officials said on Monday.

In the latest such step, the army announced that an additional 2,000 Palestinians, mostly from the Gaza Strip, would be authorised to remain overnight in Israel, notably to permit them to work on around-the-clock construction projects.

Three thousand Palestinians were given a similar authorisation late last year.

"Until now the Palestinians were obliged to leave their workplace and return home at the end of each day," said Shlomo Dror, spokesman for the military coordinator of Israeli activities in the occupied territories.

Under the new system,

selected Palestinian workers will be able to work overtime or on night shifts, something impossible for the vast majority of the 60,000 Palestinian labourers currently permitted to hold jobs in Israel.

"Our aim is to make Palestinians more attractive to employers than immigrant foreign workers," Mr. Dror told AFP.

To benefit from the eased restrictions on Palestinian workers, employers must provide adequate housing and name a foreman to ensure the Arabs remain at the worksite.

Palestinians must be at least 28 years old, married and have already worked in Israel for at least three years to obtain permission to remain in the country during the work week.

The defence ministry has also promised employers to provide special security

clearances for 30,000 Palestinians who will be allowed to reach their jobs even during security closures of the occupied territories.

Previously following major attacks in Israel the army sealed the territories, barring all workers from entering Israel. The closures have lasted anywhere from days until months, causing serious economic hardships for the Palestinians and disrupting work in many Israeli enterprises.

"Employers complain that the closures paralyse their activities and require them to hire foreign immigrant workers," Mr. Dror said.

Since the early 1990s, the number of Palestinians authorised to work in Israel has fallen from more than 100,000 while the number of foreign workers has soared to 100,000, with another 200,000 in the country illegally — notably from

Romania, Asia and Africa.

While the foreign workers are generally paid \$30 to \$50 less per month than Palestinians, the presence of large numbers of non-Jewish immigrants has created tensions and social problems in the country's main cities.

"Our new policy of reducing as much as possible the handicaps for Palestinian workers is aimed in large part at reducing the number of foreign workers," Mr. Dror said.

He said Israeli authorities were also concerned about falling living standards in the Palestinian areas over the past four years.

The economic problems undermine support for the peace process while strengthening the influence of extremists, notably Islamists who gain popular support by offering social services to poor families.



ISRAELI TROOPS FIRE ON DEMONSTRATORS: An Israeli soldier shoots at Palestinian demonstrators in Ramallah. The United States said on Monday that chances were ebbing away for a diplomatic solution to the crisis over Iraq's suspected weapons of mass destruction (Reuters photo)

Palestinian security chief admits human rights abuses

DUBAI (AFP) — A Palestinian security chief has admitted to violations of human rights in the autonomous Palestinian areas but downplayed them as individual acts, in an interview published here Monday.

Nasser Youssef, director of Palestinian General Security, was reacting to reports that several Palestinian detainees had died under torture in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

"I cannot deny such violations by some individuals in our security institutions. But they are violations by individuals, not institutions," Mr.

Youssef told the United Arab Emirates daily Al Bayan.

"They are mistakes because we are going through a new experience in our security and a transitional period from a revolution to a state, which will have its price and needs time and effort," he said.

"These individuals were fedayeen [guerrillas] or political activists, and we are doing our best to put an end to such mistakes by training them and teaching them to respect human rights."

The Palestinian National Authority (PNA) has often come under fire from local

and international organisations over human rights abuses. Several Palestinian prisoners have been reported to have died under torture.

"The Palestinian leadership realises that the world is watching our performance to help us achieve our goals," Mr. Youssef said.

"There is no doubt that the past years have witnessed tragic incidents in this connection. So we need more time to train our security elements and make them learn how to respect human rights and deal in a civilised manner."

Israel asks Swiss for gas masks

BERN (AFP) — Israel has asked Switzerland to supply it with gas masks, a Swiss federal defence department spokesman said here Monday.

The equipment request was made on Thursday by the Israeli embassy's military attaché, Hans Ruedi Moser said.

The Israeli embassy in Bern refused to comment. "We have to look now if we have enough material and how much we can sell to Israel," Mr. Moser said.

Adding that Israel had not specified how many masks it wanted.

The defence department kept a "certain stock" of gas masks but would have to check whether private manufacturers could furnish supplies.

The department would give an answer on Thursday, Mr. Moser said.

Israeli television reported Friday that Germany, Sweden, the Netherlands and the United States would shortly ship some 200,000 gas masks to Israel for use in case of an Iraqi chemical or biological attack.

Most of the imported masks would be used for an estimated 300,000 foreign workers in the country, including some 100,000 Palestinians living in parts of the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip still under Israeli control, the television said.

Israel fears that Iraq could respond to a U.S. strike by firing missiles at the Jewish state.

Israel police recently arrested a man for stealing gas masks for resale to foreign workers.

Voices in the Wilderness members to depart for Iraq with medical supplies

AMMAN (J.T.) — As the U.S. threatens military strikes against Iraq, Voices in the Wilderness announced that its 11th delegation, a joint U.S./U.K. delegation, will depart for Baghdad on Thursday with over \$110,000 worth of medicine and medical supplies for children's hospitals, according to a Voices in the Wilderness press release Monday.

While proclaiming that no Middle East country will be allowed the "capacity" to develop

weapons of mass destruction, the U.S. and the U.K. threaten to use their vast arsenal of such weapons against a country already suffering the consequences of brutal economic sanctions and previous bombardments, the announcement said.

Voices in the Wilderness member Art Laffin, of Washington, D.C., said "as tensions escalate, we call for diplomatic solutions and condemn any further military strikes against the people of Iraq. We urge the leaders of all parties

involved in the current crisis to work toward immediate lifting of the economic sanctions as the only way to solve the most pressing crisis in Iraq, the suffering of the Iraqi people."

"The real weapons of mass destruction in Iraq are the economic sanctions which have already killed hundreds of thousands," said Mary Donnelly, of Portland, Maine, who with her husband, Mike, is part of the present delegation.

Delegation members risk 12 years in prison and \$1

million in fines for carrying medicines to Iraq without authorisation, according to a letter issued by the United States Treasury Department.

Delegation members are: Kathy Kelly, Chicago; Chuck Quilty, Rock Island, Illinois; Richard McDowell, Akron, Ohio; Art Laffin, Washington, D.C.; Mike and Mary Donnelly, Portland, Maine; Martin Thomas, Essex, U.K.; and Mij Rai and Felicity Arbuthnot, London, the statement concluded.

Lebanese PM arrives in Malaysia

KUALA LUMPUR (AFP) — Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri arrived here Monday for a two-day visit aimed at developing bilateral economic relations.

Mr. Hariri, accompanied by Finance Minister Fuad Sanioura, was greeted at

the airport by Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohammad and Foreign Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, Bernama news agency reported.

This is Mr. Hariri's second visit in three years.

Both Mr. Hariri and Mr. Mahathir will later hold

talks and witness the signing of several bilateral agreements, mainly regarding investment protection.

Trade between the two countries remained modest — \$22 million in 1996 — with Malaysia importing only \$300,000 worth of Lebanese goods.

UAE magazine warns Arabs off from U.S.

ABU DHABI (AFP) — A United Arab Emirates (UAE) magazine on Monday warned Arab countries off from the United States, saying their turn would come once Washington dismantles Iraq's military machine.

Under the headline, "Whose turn after Iraq?" the weekly Al Shurq said U.S. allegations that Iraq remained a threat to its neighbours were a lie.

"We say this because by neighbours they mean one party: Israel," the magazine said in a commentary on U.S. threats to attack Iraq if it continues to

refuse access for U.N. arms inspectors to enter presidential sites.

"When America carries out what it wants in Iraq, nothing will prevent it from moving to another [Arab] party that raises its voice against Israel, the regional order and U.S. interests, which are numerous," it said.

The mass-circulation weekly said Washington would seek new excuses to attack Iraq in future if it could not launch a strike in the current crisis because of what it called opposition from Arab states and other

countries.

"Settling scores will not be confined to Iraq but to all those who say no to the U.S.," it said.

"The institution of Arab summits should be reactivated and Arabs should take advantage of the Russian, Chinese and, to a lesser extent, French opposition" to a U.S. attack on Iraq, it said.

"Otherwise, their turn will come, collectively or separately, and Israel will remain... the dominant power and the only party to possess and use weapons of mass destruction."

Turkey downsizing Baghdad embassy

ANKARA (AFP) — Turkey said Monday it was reducing the personnel at its embassy in Baghdad amid the ongoing crisis over U.N. weapons inspections in Iraq.

"It will be a normal thing

to reduce the personnel and continue operations with a skeleton crew only," foreign ministry spokesman Necati Utkan said.

"It will also be normal to let the women and children leave, but the chief of the

mission is authorised to make the decision according to the situation," Mr. Utkan said, adding that some may already have left.

Turkey's ambassador in Baghdad, Selim Karasmanoglu, told Turkish state

television on Sunday night that the embassy would continue operating, and denied reports of plans for a full evacuation.

Mr. Karasmanoglu said he would remain in the Iraqi capital.

Six Sudanese soldiers killed in attack — opposition

CAIRO (AFP) — The armed Sudanese opposition on Monday said 10 soldiers were killed during a weekend attack in the southeast near the Ethiopian border.

"Forces of the Sudanese Alliance (FAS) continued their advance south of Gallabat and were able Sunday to capture the town of Al Farza after a battle with the enemy that left 10 dead in their ranks," the executive office of the FAS said in a

statement received by AFP.

The opposition army, which is allied with the Sudanese People's Liberation Army (SPLA) against the Khartoum regime, had already claimed to have killed 91 government soldiers on Saturday.

They said they captured the government military garrison on the island of Doud, also south of Gallabat, as well as a large amount of arms and munitions.

The FAS communiqué

on Monday said the opposition forces had taken two government soldiers prisoner and additional arms "including missile launchers, nine cannon of various calibres, four mortars, 11 machine-guns and light arms and munitions."

The opposition, which has been fighting to overthrow Khartoum's Islamist regime since 1989, has

mounted several attacks since the start of the year against government positions in the south.

The SPLA, the main component of the umbrella National Democratic Alliance, attacked government positions in the southern Bahr Al Ghazal region about two weeks ago.

Fighting is also under way along the border between Sudan and Eritrea.

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel. 773111-19

PROGRAMME TWO
14:10Cartoon — Cro
16:30French Cartoon Films
18:00Small Talk
18:30Border Town
19:00Le Journal
19:15French Documentary
19:30News Headlines
19:35Comedy — A Whole New Ball Game
20:00What Would You Do?
20:30Encounter
21:10 Drama — Burned Bridge
22:00News in English
22:30 Feature Film — "The Deliverance of the Elaine"
23:59Metro Cafe

PRAYER TIMES

05:01Fajr
06:19(Sunrise) Dhuha
11:50Dhuhr
14:53Asr
17:20Maghreb
18:39Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Sweifeh, Tel. 810740
Assemblies of God Church
Tel. 632785.

St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590

Church of the Annunciation
Tel. 637440.
De la Salle Church Tel.
661757.

Terra Sancta Church Tel.
622366

Anglican Church Tel. 652826.

Armenian Catholic Church
Tel. 771331.

Armenian Orthodox Church
Tel. 775261.

St. Ephraim Church Tel.
771751.

Armenian International Church
Tel. 865897

Evangelical Lutheran Church
Tel. 824328.

German-speaking Evangelical
Congregation Tel. 845457

The Latter-Day Saints Tel.
654932.

Church of Nazareth Tel.
675691.

The Evangelical Local Church
in Amman Tel. 811295

English-speaking
Latin Catholics Parish Tel.
614190.

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology

Cold weather conditions will prevail with skies cloudy to partly cloudy. Intermittent thunder showers are expected as thin layers of snow will cover mountainous areas of very high altitudes. Winds will be northeasterly to easterly moderate to active. In Aqaba, skies will be partly cloudy with a chance of showers, winds northerly moderate to active, and seas choppy.

Amman04/09
Aqaba09/19
Deserts04/08
Jordan Valley07/16

Yesterday's high temperatures:
Amman 11, Aqaba 21 Humidity readings: Amman 69 per cent, Aqaba 36 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY
AMMAN:
Dr. Ghaleb Abu Shikhab 752405
Dr. Mukheles Halaseh 5519220
Dr. Rami Sukkar 856457
Dr. Fadi Al Khatib 865456

Ferdows pharmacy 778336
Al Asena pharmacy 637055
Al Salam pharmacy 636730
Yacoub pharmacy 649455
Shmeisani pharmacy 637660
Naroukh pharmacy 623672

IRBID:
Dr. Fawzi Abul Hajja 252970
Al Quds pharmacy (—)
ZARQA:
Dr. Issa Al Omari 918932
Khalifeh pharmacy 985417

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Shmeisani pharmacy 637660
Naroukh pharmacy 623672

IRBID:
Dr. Fawzi Abul Hajja 252970
Al Quds pharmacy (—)
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JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

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18:00Small Talk
18:30Border Town
19:00Le Journal
19:15French Documentary
19:30News Headlines
19:35Comedy — A Whole New Ball Game
20:00What Would You Do?
20:30Encounter
21:10 Drama — Burned Bridge
22:00News in English
22:30 Feature Film — "The Deliverance of the Elaine"
23:59Metro Cafe

PRAYER TIMES

05:01Fajr
06:19(Sunrise) Dhuha
11:50Dhuhr
14:53Asr
17:20Maghreb
18:39Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Sweifeh, Tel. 810740
Assemblies of God Church
Tel. 632785.

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

Tel. 773111-19

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HRH Princess Basma on Monday talks with a student after the awards ceremony for the 1997 Hashemite Competition for Health and Solidarity (Petra photo)

Princess Basma distributes awards to charity competition winners

AMMAN (J.T.) — HRH Princess Basma distributed awards Monday to the 52 students who won the 1997 Hashemite Competition for Health and Solidarity (HCHS) and voiced appreciation of the various organisations and schools that contributed to the success of the competition's charity campaign.

The HCHS was created three years ago as a programme of the Queen Alia Fund for Social Development (QAF) to raise public and student awareness on the need for social solidarity and helping the disabled.

A total of 600,000 people took part in the competition this year, reflecting the Jordanian people's interest in extending a helping hand to the disabled, the Princess said at the awards ceremony, which was held at the Islamic Cultural

Centre within the King Abdullah Mosque complex.

Over the past three years, the HCHS has succeeded in securing contributions for 277 persons and children suffering from cerebral palsy. It has also financed the opening of 30 classrooms at the Ministry of Education's schools for the benefit of the learning disabled, benefiting 600 students around the country, the Princess noted.

The competition is normally conducted through special questionnaires distributed to students for a 250 fils fee, each providing some information about the care for the disabled. The students are then asked to answer specific questions about matters related to helping the disabled.

A QAF official told the Jordan Times that banks and other organisations contribute

to the programme in the form of electrical and other appliances, including television sets and videos, as well as cash, to be distributed to the winners.

At the ceremony, Princess Basma distributed the programme's shields to 170 people in recognition of their contributions and support for QAF programmes.

She also expressed her gratitude to the higher committee, which groups prominent personalities representing the private and public sectors and is chaired by businessman Taher Taber.

Princess Basma later inspected various equipment displayed at a special exhibition for the benefit of the blind and was briefed on training programmes for the blind enabling them to use special Braille-equipped computers.

Arab human rights group blasts government's 1997 record

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Arab Organisation for Human Rights (AOHR) has slammed the government's human rights record and faulted the elections and press and publication laws as a setback for Jordan's democracy and public freedoms.

In its annual report, published on Sunday, the AOHR attacked the elections and press and publication laws for infringing upon citizens' constitutional and legal rights.

It said the 1997 temporary press and publication law, recently declared unconstitutional by Jordan's supreme court, "severely constrained the press and journalists, especially by raising the capital requirements for dailies to JD600,000, as well as imposing tough sanctions on violators of the law."

The report denounced irregularities in voting and tallying procedures during last

November's general elections.

It said the voting lists included 120,000 repeated names, the number of seats allocated to some districts did not reflect the population therein, and voting procedures were interrupted for hours in some districts.

AOHR also reported candidates' and voters' complaints on the authorities' supervision of the elections. It charged that some candidates used government vehicles and other facilities for their campaign.

It also criticised the fact that between 2-3 days elapsed before the government officially announced the winners, the number of voters and the number of votes for each candidate.

In the field of justice, the report said last year witnessed an increase in the number of arbitrary arrests and detentions, as well as other violations of personal rights.

As for flagrant violations of the basic right to life, the report cited the case of Samer Muhammad Ziad Khizer, who died as a result of severe beating while in custody.

The report blasted the General Intelligence Department (GID) and the police for repeatedly violating citizens' rights to justice and personal safety, raiding homes without the proper authorisation, beating convicts in order to obtain confessions, confiscating passports or identity documents, and prohibiting visitation rights of prisoners.

The AOHR said also prisoners' rights were seriously violated during the year 1997.

The report presented evidence of violations against the right to work and asserted that some citizens were unjustly prevented from working in some government departments or were refused employment for not producing good conduct certificates.

New party hopes to improve ties between Jordanian, Israeli peoples — spokesperson

By Francesca Ciriaci
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Jordan's newest political party has said it will seek to cement relations between the Jordanian and Israeli peoples, but will oppose the policies of the current Likud-led Israeli government.

The Jordanian Labour Party (JLP), which was licensed only a few days ago, will also support the needs and aspirations of the working class, JLP Spokesperson Ahmad Qablan told the Jordan Times on Monday in a telephone interview.

Jordan's 20th political party "took its name from our belief that the working class, the man-in-the-street, is the most important contributor to the well-being of this country," Mr. Qablan said.

The 60 founding members of

the JLP represent people from walks of life ranging from school teachers, government employees and housewives.

"Our people come from the bottom, and not from the top," Mr. Qablan said, adding that his party, however, could not be described either as an opposition or a leftist group.

The JLP will strive for a just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East, he said, but, though encouraging students' and businessmen's exchange trips to and from Israel, strongly rejects the headline policies of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

However, a JLP member — Khalil Bataineh — who last week travelled to Israel and met with an Israeli rabbi was expelled from the party on Saturday.

"We did not know anything

about this trip, which was Dr. Bataineh's personal initiative," Mr. Qablan pointed out.

"He was expelled because he did not discuss the trip with the party, but portrayed himself as a party envoy."

The JLP held its first congress on Saturday, and elected Mohammad Khataibeh as its secretary general.

In its charter, the party promised to seek to enhance stability and security through respecting and abiding by the existing laws, give due attention to the industrial and agricultural sectors, and support measures to contain unemployment.

The party also promised to strive to safeguard women's constitutional rights, give due attention to the youth and the environment, and fight monopoly.

Palestinian health minister arrives for discussions on bilateral cooperation

AMMAN (J.T.) — Palestinian Health Minister Riyad Zannoun arrived in Amman on Monday at the head of an official delegation for talks on Jordanian-Palestinian cooperation in health-related fields.

Dr. Zannoun, who will hold talks with his Jordanian counterpart Ashraf Kurdi during his three-day visit, said he hopes that the existing level of cooperation will be expanded,

especially concerning the transfer of Palestinian patients suffering from complicated cases to Jordanian hospitals.

He said the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) hopes that Jordan will agree to provide training to Palestinian personnel and will arrange for the export of Jordanian drugs in cooperation with the pharmaceutical industry.

The PNA hopes that the two sides will translate their health cooperation protocol into practical steps serving both peoples, he added.

Under the July 1996 health cooperation protocol, the two sides will cooperate in providing primary health care services dealing with areas such as sanitation, food safety, endemic and communicable diseases, family and commu-

nity medicine, and nursing, and exchange information about contagious diseases should an outbreak occur.

Also under the protocol, Jordan will offer medical treatment to Palestinians at Ministry of Health centres and hospitals and will grant free medical treatment to 10 Palestinian patients a year if they are formally referred by the PNA.

The protocol provides medium- and long-term training courses for medical staff, with Jordan agreeing to train up to 16 health officials annually.

Jordan will also test vaccines for the PNA at Ministry of Health laboratories.

During Dr. Zannoun's visit, he will tour hospitals, health institutions and other facilities.

China urges diplomacy in Iraq-U.N. crisis — ambassador

AMMAN (Petra) — The ambassador of the People's Republic of China to Jordan, Liu Baolai, on Monday stated that China supports a diplomatic solution to the U.N.-Iraqi crisis and voiced his country's concern over the tense situation over weapons inspections.

In an interview with the Jordan New Agency, Petra, Mr. Baolai said China is currently exerting efforts with all concerned parties to find a solution to the crisis obviating the need for military force.

"China calls on all concerned parties to exercise self-restraint in order to stop aggravating the situation," said Mr. Baolai.

"We call upon Iraq to implement all the U.N. Security Council resolutions in a comprehensive and effective manner and ask others to respect Iraq's sovereignty and find a way to help end the suffering of the Iraqi people," he added.

"The suffering of the Iraqis should be put to an end and the inspection files should be closed as soon as possible," said the Chinese ambassador.

Majali urges ministry to speed up work on water network replacement

AMMAN (J.T.) — Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali on Monday urged the Ministry of Water and Irrigation to speed up work on the replacement of old and worn out water networks in Amman and other areas of Jordan.

Addressing a meeting at the ministry, Dr. Majali said water projects are of strategic importance and have assumed a priority in

view of the Kingdom's need of water resources.

He noted that the Kingdom has been promised foreign capital for investments in these projects.

Work on replacing old water networks started in 1995 with the goal of saving the at least 35 per cent of total water supplies that had been leaking out. In December 1997, the Water Authority of Jordan (WAJ)

announced that Germany was financing part of the project in Amman at the cost of about \$27.3 million.

Dr. Majali said the recent rains promise a good agricultural season and adequate water storage behind dams and in underground aquifers.

Minister of Water and Irrigation Munther Haddadin reviewed the ministry's plans and the

Coroner testifies defendant's wife, four children shot at close range

By Rana Hussein
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — A coroner testifying in the trial of a 40-year-old man charged with killing his wife and four of his six children in Karak in May told the court Monday that all the victims were shot at close range.

The defendant, Awad Muhammad, reportedly opened fire on his family shortly after midnight on May 13, killing his 35-year-old wife Samar Salah and his

children Ahmad, seven, Basma, six, Sahar, 18 months, and Ibrahim, three months.

"Each of the five victims was killed with a sole bullet wound to either the head or chest at close range," Mo'men Hadidi, head of the National Institute for Forensic Medicine, told the court.

Dr. Hadidi, who was cross-examined by Criminal Prosecutor Zuhair Atiyat and Mr. Muhammad's Defence Attorney Ali Talafah, added that Basma also "suffered from at

least 15 bruises to her head caused by a blunt object."

Mr. Mohammad reportedly told the authorities shortly after his arrest that he killed his wife and children "to cleanse his family's honour."

According to the prosecution charge sheet, the suspect, who was married to Ms. Salah in 1987 and resided in several cities and countries, became suspicious of his wife's conduct five years after the marriage.

The sheet added that in mid-1996, Mr. Mohammad

plotted to kill his wife and children, whom he believed were not his, and bought a gun for that purpose.

On the night of the murder, the defendant locked the doors to his house and opened fire at his wife and six children, it said.

The court trial, headed by Judge Mohammad Ajameh, and including Judges Miftah Mubeidin and Yassin Abdullah, adjourned the trial to Feb. 15 to hear the last two prosecution witnesses in the case.

Senate votes against sexual segregation clause

By Fairouz Abu-Ghazaleh
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The Upper House of Parliament (Senate), for the second time in less than four years, on Monday voted against a legal clause passed by the previous Lower House calling for the segregation of sexes at swimming pools, in line with Islamic tradition.

The 80-seat Lower House had endorsed the controversial article in 1992 under a youth welfare draft law that would have granted the Ministry of Youth the right to license "sports and youth centres, including swimming pools and life guards."

The previous Lower House, whose term ended in March 1997, was dominated by conservative tribal leaders and Islamists who added a phrase to the article stating that such a licence would be granted on condition that the sexes are "segregated."

Opposition, professionals denounce threat of U.S. military action against Iraq

By Tareq Ayyoub
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Opposition parties and professional unions on Monday criticised U.S. threats against Iraq following its 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

The deputy secretary general of the pro-Syria Ba'ath Progressive Party, Fou'ad Dabour, charged that the objective behind the U.S. "aggression" against Iraq was to "topple the Iraqi government and establish a pro-U.S. regime."

"Any U.S. strike is aggression not only against Iraq, but the Arab Nation as a whole," Mr. Dabour told the 250 professionals gathered at the main hall at the Professional Associations Complex in Shmeisani.

"The government should close the U.S. and British embassies in Amman and deny their naval vessels access to Jordan's only port in their attack against Iraq," Mr. Dabour said.

He urged the government

to cut diplomatic ties with Israel, expel its ambassador from Amman and put an end to normalisation of ties with the Jewish state.

"Arab peoples should challenge U.S. and British interests in the region," Mr. Dabour, speaking on behalf of 11 opposition parties, said.

He called on the Arab states to hold an urgent summit of the 21-member Arab League to discuss the escalation between Iraq and the United States.

"Iraq is history, civilisation and the future. America is a barbaric country that wants to destroy history and civilisation," Hussein Mjali, head of the lawyers association, said.

The head of engineers association, Leith Shbeilat, also accused the government of siding with the United States and called for the establishment of a "national government."

"Today Jordan is support-

ing the aggression... and taking part in the conspiracy against our brothers in Iraq," Mr. Shbeilat charged.

He urged the audience to join a proposed procession on Friday from the Hussein Mosque to Hashimiyah Square downtown in a show of support for Iraq.

Meanwhile, the National Constitutional Party (NCP) criticised the U.S. threats against Iraq and called for a peaceful solution to the crisis.

"We denounce any military action against Iraq," said a party statement.

"Any aggression against Iraq is a threat to Arab security as a whole."

"At the moment, we call on Iraq to comply with the U.N. resolutions, [and] we urge the world body to set a timetable for lifting the unjustified sanctions against Iraq," the party statement said.

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University issues warnings to students over film on Hamas member — spokesperson

By Tareq Ayyoub
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The University of Jordan has issued warnings to three students for showing a film on campus to commemorate a Palestinian who masterminded a series of deadly attacks against Israeli targets, according to a spokesperson for the student council.

Hamzah Hasanat, a science student at the university, said the warnings were given to him and two of his colleagues, Abdul Rahman Matar and Ihab Asa'ad.

He said the decision was taken by the Faculty of Science administration follow-

ing the college's student council cultural week, held in December to commemorate the second anniversary of the death of Yahya Ayash, a member of the Izzedine Qassam Brigade, the military arm of the Islamic Resistance Movement.

Ayash, nicknamed the Engineer, was killed by a booby-trapped cellular phone believed to have been planted by Mossad, the Israeli secret service.

No party officially took responsibility for the assassination, but Israeli security officials implicitly indicated that it was carried out by Israeli agents.

Mr. Hasanat told the Jor-

dan Times that university security intervened when the film began and tried to end it.

"The university guards tried to attack the students and prevent the show by force," charged Mr. Hasanat.

He added an investigation team was formed by the faculty administration to punish those responsible for the show, accusing the council of not obtaining the necessary permission to hold such a function.

According to Mr. Hasanat, the council obtained permission for the cultural week, but not specifically for the showing of the film.

"The internal law of the

university stipulates that the faculty administration has no right to interfere in the details of any cultural activities if the council obtains the necessary permission," Mr. Hasanat said.

He said that Mr. Matar, the council's chief, received a double warrant while he and Mr. Asa'ad received a different punishment.

Despite several attempts by the Jordan Times, the head of the Faculty of Science, Nasser Salah, refused to comment on the issue.

Mr. Asa'ad said the faculty's students will stage a sit-in this week, followed by absents themselves from classes, to protest against the decision.

what's going on

FILM
* "Mr. Bean" at the British Council, Jabal Amman at 6:00 p.m.
CONFERENCE
* Conference by the IUCN-the World Conservation Union and the National Committee of the IUCN in Jordan at the Royal Cultural Centre at 10:00 a.m. (Starting today and lasting on Feb. 14).

LECTURE
* "German-Arab Relations After 1945" (in English) by Dr. Ali Mahafza at Goethe-Institut, Jabal Amman at 6:30 p.m.

Mystery group claims murder as Chirac due on French island

AJACCIO, Corsica (AFP) — A mystery separatist group Monday claimed the political assassination of France's top official in Corsica as President Jacques Chirac prepared to fly in to deliver a firm message against violence on the troubled Mediterranean island.

Police meanwhile arrested a 13th suspect, a dissident nationalist, in the latest of a series of raids Monday targeting nationalist groups suspected of involvement in the killing of the prefect, Claude Erignac.

Friday's assassination of the 60-year-old state official, shot in the back of the head by two men, has shocked France and stunned Corsica. The first murder of such a senior representative on the island, it is seen as the worst act of political violence in more than two decades of unrest.

The claim of responsibility, sent to the local press, was not signed but regarded as authentic because it gave manufacturer's reference numbers for a Beretta 9 mm pistol used by the gunmen that was found at the scene of the killing.

"The action we are claiming today was perfectly thought-out and highly political," the three-page

typewritten statement said. It said the killing "is not the fruit of deviationists or an isolated action by so-called 'renegade soldiers' of the nationalist struggle, or even less a criminal action as some people will not fail to say."

The statement said the gun used came from the Pietrosella police station, and quoted the reference A 00199. The pistol was identified by police at the weekend as having been seized from officers last September in an attack claimed by a previously unknown group, Sampieru.

"Erignac," the claim went on to say, "played an implacable colonialist role in spite of a human face." The prefect's primary task is to maintain Corsica in a state of economic dependence vis-à-vis France.

Erignac was slain in this Corsican capital city Friday evening while on his way to a theatre to attend a concert. Bells tolled across the island at 10:00 a.m. (0900 GMT) and shops, offices and schools observed 15 minutes of silence called by local politicians and trade unions.

Mr. Chirac, Prime Minister Lionel Jospin and other members of the government were flying to the

island Monday afternoon to pay a tribute to Erignac.

Flags across France will be dipped to half-mast and prefectures across France will hold a minute of silence coinciding with the start of the Ajaccio ceremony at 4.00 p.m. (1500 GMT).

Corsica has been ravaged by thousands of bombings since the launch of a separatist movement in 1975 but there have been relatively few murders and none of a figure such as Erignac, who represented the authority of the French state.

Birthplace of Napoleon Bonaparte and ruled by France since 1768 after five centuries of Genoese sovereignty, Corsica is a tourist haven of beaches and high peaks, but it is dogged by high unemployment and under-development.

Tests for traces of firearms on two suspects hauled in immediately after the shooting have proved inconclusive and the pair are expected to be released, police said.

In dawn raids, police picked up a dozen suspects, including dissident nationalists and associates, as well as common criminals, police said. A 13th man described as a dissident

nationalist, Marcel Lorenzoni, was also later detained by a crack police unit.

France's top anti-terrorist investigators and magistrates have been rushed to the island in the wake of the killing. Airports and ports are under strict surveillance and sharpshooters have been posted around key government buildings.

Investigators from the outset suggested the murder might be the work of dissidents from one of the many Corsican nationalist groups.

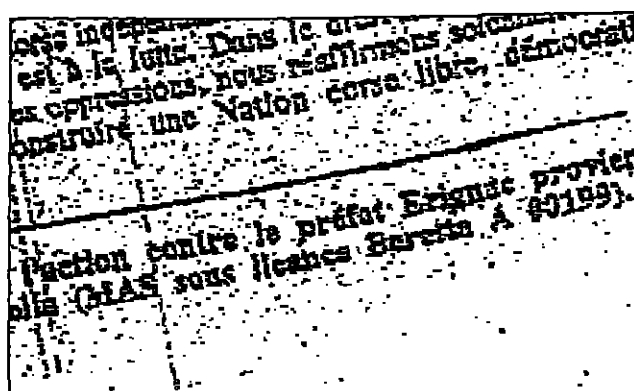
Erignac's murder came just two weeks after one group, the FLNC-Historic wing, announced an end to a seven-month ceasefire, saying France's eight-month-old Socialist-led government had done nothing to meet their demands.

But the group's political wing, A Cuncolta Naziunale, was one of several nationalist groups which condemned the shooting.

Nationalist political groups, most supported by armed factions, are badly divided. Many of their leaders were killed in a deadly fratricidal war in 1995 and suspicions linger of Mafia-style links with some of the separatists.



Picture dated Jan. 10, 1980, shows Corsican nationalist leader Marcel Lorenzoni who was arrested in early morning raids across the island (AFP photo)



The unsigned communiqué in which unidentified Corsican separatists claim responsibility for the killing of Claude Erignac; the document has been considered genuine by police because it includes the serial number of the murder weapon (Reuters photo)

Afghan forces trade fire, as aid workers battle to help quake victims

KABUL (AFP) — Rescue workers Monday told of the devastation they found in a quake-hit region of northern Afghanistan as they battled to distribute emergency aid, amid reports of renewed fighting between the Taleban and the opposition alliance.

As relief efforts gathered pace, initial reports from a humanitarian team in the northern province of Takhar substantiated fears that around 4,000 people or more may have perished in last Wednesday's earthquake.

A team from Medecins Sans Frontières (MSF), the first to arrive on the scene, were told in one flattened village that 1,800 people had been killed there alone.

Other 300 died in a nearby half-destroyed village, the MSF team said in a message received by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) at its office in Pakistan.

At least a dozen villages in the remote region were hit by the quake in the midst of Afghanistan's harsh winter.

Relief teams are having to deal with aftershocks and the cold as well as fears of more fighting between the Islamic Taleban militia and the opposition alliance, which controls the Takhar province.

Afghan sources said the two sides exchanged artillery shells Monday around Bangi area between Takhar and neighbouring Kunduz held by the Taleban militia.

The Afghan Islamic Press (AIP), a private Pakistan-based information agency, said both sides blamed each other for the duel.

AIP quoted a spokesman for the Taleban as saying the Islamic warriors would not

launch any military operation until early Tuesday, when a ceasefire they declared is due to expire.

Although estimates of the death toll have fluctuated, two major aftershocks have claimed 250 more lives, according to the Afghan embassy in Tajikistan's capital Dushanbe.

ICRC sources said a plane flew to Khawajaghar airfield near Rostaq Monday, carrying medical kits and some European Commission (EC) officials.

A convoy of trucks loaded with emergency medical supplies, thousands of blankets and other relief material, including plastic sheets for shelters and clothing, was on its way to the region from northern Mazari-Sharif, they said.

A team left northern Kunduz in the morning, headed for Rostaq with medical help, the sources said.

The United Nations agencies have also mobilised resources for the relief operations and the EC humanitarian office announced Saturday it had set aside \$2.2 million for the relief effort.

An ICRC spokesman, Juan Martinez, said it was possible 4,000 people may have been killed following the reports from the MSF team.

"Maybe the figure of 4,000 is possible. It could be possible because of the latest figures," he said here.

The information from MSF reported that more than 2,000 had been killed in two villages alone.

The opposition has accused the militia of being indifferent to the plight of the quake victims.

Bangladesh tribal rebels turn in weapons ahead of surrender

CHITTAGONG, Bangladesh (AFP) — The first group of rebels Monday began turning in their weapons to the army in Bangladesh's southeastern Khagrachari hill district ahead of a formal surrender marking the end of a 22-year insurgency.

The Shanti Bahini rebels were handing in their arms for military security checks before Tuesday's historic weapons surrender at the Khagrachari stadium in line with a landmark peace pact signed in December, security officials said.

Government leaders, including Home Minister Rafiqul Islam, and tribal leaders witnessed the event, which is a major part of the peace treaty.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina Wajed will Tuesday formally receive weapons from tribal chief Jotindira Bodhipriya Lama, alias Shanti Lama, who heads the Parbatya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samity (PCJSS), the political wing of tribal Shanti Bahini (Peace Force) rebels.

Politicians, diplomats and dignitaries will attend the ceremony to be broadcast live on state-run television and radio, officially disbanding the Shanti Bahini and marking the end of 22 years of bloodshed in which 25,000 people have been killed.

Of 2,000 insurgents, 600

will give up their weapons — mostly Chinese-made AK-47 assault rifles, mortars and various guns — at the main ceremony and 200 others will surrender them Wednesday. The rest will follow in three phases until Feb. 28.

Those who turn in their weapons will receive 50,000 taka (\$1,063) in return to help start a new life.

A ban on demonstrations has also been in force in the southeastern Chittagong port city and Chittagong Hill Tracts since Friday.

The ban was possibly in response to plans by the opposition, led by the Bangladesh Nationalist Party of former Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, for a nationwide demonstration and a general strike in Chittagong and the hill districts.

The BNP has opposed the treaty and demanded that it be withdrawn deeming it to be a sell-out to India, and claiming it compromised the country's sovereignty.

Bangladesh Friday announced it will pardon tribal rebels who surrender their weapons Tuesday, when an amnesty will take effect.

An announcement by the home ministry said the "criminal cases and arrest warrants against them will be withdrawn and legal steps will be taken for release of those who are (now) in prison."

"No cases will be filed or arrest warrant issued or punishment will be given to any members only on the charges of his or her involvement with PCJSS activities after surrender of weapons and return to normal life," it said.

Those who have been tried in absentia would also be exempted of punishment, it added.

The amnesty will be applicable to all permanent residents of the Chittagong Hill Tracts involved with the PCJSS.

Since 1994, a total of 51,462 tribesmen who had fled to India's Tripura state because of the insurgency have returned to Bangladesh and repatriations would continue until the last of the remaining 13,000 returned.

The former tribal rebels have been fighting a bush war since 1974 for autonomy and the expulsion of Bengali-speaking settlers from the scenic mineral and natural gas-rich hill tracts region, bordering India and Myanmar.

Under the agreement the government has pledged to pump in millions of taka in development into the area, and it is hoped foreign gas and oil companies will slowly move in.

Meanwhile tribesmen who fled to India during the insurgency are also being repatriated.



Cambodian opposition figure Sam Rainsy blasts Cambodian leader Hun Sen at a Phnom Penh court house, accusing him of seeking to undermine opposition parties ahead of a July general election (Reuters photo)

Former Khmer Rouge deputy premier back in Cambodian capital

PHNOM PENH (AFP) — Former Khmer Rouge Deputy Premier Ieng Sary has returned to Phnom Penh for only the second time since the guerrillas were ousted from power in 1979.

Pol Pot's former foreign minister and brother-in-law, who split from the hardline central leadership two years ago and now cooperates with Phnom Penh, arrived in the capital Sunday accompanied by his wife, Khieu Thirith, the sister of Pol Pot's first wife, Khieu Ponnary.

His return Sunday also comes just one week after two of his top aides officially joined a new political party headed by the acting president of the National Assembly.

Ieng Sary, who had a luncheon meeting with powerful Second Prime Minister Hun Sen Monday and plans to meet other senior officials, told reporters that his visit was not politically related.

"I just came to visit the capital and I will stay for a while longer," he said Monday, adding: "This is just a family visit."

He said he would not stand as a candidate in July's scheduled election but that members of his Democratic National Union

Movement (DNUM) would be running for parliament as members of registered political parties.

"I will not participate in the coming elections but DNUM members are free to join any political party," he said, adding he asked those who took that route to remain loyal to the DNUM's principles of peace and national reconciliation.

Ieng Sary arrived in Phnom Penh exactly seven days after two of his top aides, personal secretary Long Noron and former division commander Prum Su, joined a new political party headed by the acting president of the National Assembly.

The two men joined the Sangkum Thmei (New Society) party headed by Loy Sim Chheang, a former senior official in the royalist FUNCINPEC party of deposed co-Premier Prince Norodom Ranariddh.

Analysts said the move was likely designed to allow the DNUM to put up candidates for parliament in areas they control without attracting adverse attention from those concerned with the group's past.

The DNUM controls the

gem- and timber-rich areas of Pailin and Phnom Malai on Cambodia's northwest border with Thailand and despite officially coming under control of Phnom Penh operates with relative autonomy.

In August, 1996, Ieng Sary and his men split with the Khmer Rouge central leadership and established relations with the government.

In return, Ieng Sary was granted a royal pardon that lifted a 1979 death sentence against him on genocide charges and immunised him from prosecution under 1994 legislation that bans the Khmer Rouge.

Ieng Sary and his wife were members of the Khmer Rouge's central committee which is held responsible for the deaths of as many as two million Cambodians during its 1975 to 1979 "killing fields" regime.

Ieng Sary first returned to Phnom Penh after the Khmer Rouge were ousted from power last November when he said the DNUM continued to support the government following the violent July ouster of deposed co-Premier Prince Norodom Ranariddh.

Cardinal denies church turned blind eye to paedophile priests

BRUSSELS (AFP) — Cardinal Godfried Danneels, the leader of Belgium's Roman Catholic community, made an unprecedented court appearance here Monday to reject charges that the church had been negligent in dealing with a priest charged with repeated sexual abuse of children.

The church "severely condemns" acts of paedophilia.

Cardinal Danneels told the trial of Andre Vander Lijn, a 63-year-old priest

accused of having abused 10 children in his Brussels parish over the last 30 years.

"It is particularly grave for a priest to breach the relation of trust that exists between the clergy and the faithful," Cardinal Danneels said.

The cardinal, a staunch traditionalist once tipped as a future pope, had refused to take the stand at an earlier hearing in the case but was ordered to appear by the trial judge, Claire de Gryse.

Congo strongman's aggrieved ex-militia go on looting spree

KINSHASA (AFP) — Dozens of aggrieved ex-militiamen who helped bring back power to Congo's President Denis Sassou Nguesso went on a looting spree Monday in the capital Brazzaville, where witnesses and the radio also reported shots.

The worst pillage was in the northern Ouenze district, where young former Cobra militia fighters demanding incorporation into the security forces raided several shops before riot police restored order, witnesses said.

"Some stores were looted today in Ouenze by young militiamen who were not selected to join the ranks of the police, the army or the gendarmerie (paramilitary police)," one resident told AFP in Kinshasa by telephone.

Another local source said that riot police restored order in the north of Brazzaville, which lies across the Congo river from Kinshasa, capital of the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Official Radio Congo, meanwhile, said that automatic weapons fire broke

out in Baongo, the southern part of the capital, around a filling station close to the street market known as "Total", the biggest in Brazzaville.

The radio gave no explanation for the shooting, but said that it had caused panic in districts close to the market.

One witness said that former militiamen who backed General Sassou Nguesso during the civil war between June and October last year against the elected president Pascal Lissouba, were furious that they had been turned down as members of the armed forces following medical check-ups at the M'Pila military base in Brazzaville.

Since the war which saw the return to power of Sassou Nguesso, shooting blamed on the Cobras or uncontrolled armed gangs have often been heard in Brazzaville.

Tuesday last week, the city's Roman Catholic archbishop, Barthélemy Batantou, publicly spoke out against summary executions and the setting of scores by violent means.

Bush fires flare on Sumatra island

JAKARTA (R) — Bush fires have flared on Indonesia's Sumatra Island while others continue to burn in Borneo, government officials said Monday.

They said four "hot spots" or areas affected by fires were recorded by satellite imagery Friday in Riau and two others in Aceh, both on Sumatra. Meanwhile, 19 hot spots were seen in Kalimantan, the Indonesian part of Borneo.

"The fires have spread to Sumatra and the fires continue to flare up in Kalimantan," said an official at the Indonesian Aeronautics and Space Agency (LAPAN).

Widespread Indonesian fires, many of them in Kalimantan and Sumatra, raged for months last year. Smoke drifted across south-east Asia causing health problems in neighbouring Singapore and Malaysia.

The smog even reached some parts of Thailand and the Philippines.

The official Antara news agency reported Monday that the fires which were raging at a forest reserve in east Kalimantan were caused by farmers who wanted to clear land.

It quoted Forestry Minister Djamiluddin Suryohadikusumo as saying that satellite photographs had indicated the fires were caused by farmers, adding

the ministry had sent an aircraft to help put out the blaze.

The government earlier said that 265,000 hectares of forests in the archipelago were burnt during the fires of the extended dry season in 1997.

The spread of the fires, many of them deliberately lit to clear land for agricultural purposes, was blamed on the prolonged dry season caused by the el Nino weather effect originating in the Pacific Ocean.

Shanghai commemorates centenary of Zhou Enlai's birth

SHANGHAI (AFP) — Shanghai is producing 10,000 bronze mirrors to commemorate the centenary of the birth of Zhou Enlai on March 5, Xinhua news agency said Monday.

The hand-polished mirrors, 100 millimetres in diameter, reveal under a bright light an image of Zhou Enlai and the six Chinese characters "Our Beloved Premier" on its face, the report said.

On the reverse, there are

16 characters expressing the love the Chinese people cherish for the late premier, it said.

The mirrors are numbered and bear the signature of designer Sheng Zongyi, the man who dis-

covered why bronze mirrors from the Western Han Dynasty (B.C. 206-23) can reveal an image under bright sunlight.

Apart from the mirrors, Shanghai newspapers have been publishing arti-

cles about Zhou Enlai who died of cancer on Jan. 8, 1976, while a documentary on his foreign affairs achievements, including footage never shown before, is being aired on television.

Chechen special forces free kidnapped Polish aid workers

GROZNY, Russia (AFP) — Chechen special forces freed five Polish aid workers kidnapped Monday in an early morning raid ending their almost eight week hostage ordeal, Chechen security service chief Lechu Khutlugin said.

The Poles, joint organisers of a humanitarian aid convoy to the village of Samushka, near Grozny, were kidnapped on Dec. 17 as they returned from a meeting with authorities in the Chechen capital Grozny.

Mr. Khutlugin said two people were arrested in the surprise raid on the kidnappers' hideout in a northern suburb of Grozny. The Poles were released without a shot being fired, he added.

"Although the five had not been beaten by their captors, they had spent much of their seven and a half weeks in captivity handcuffed," Mr. Khutlugin said, adding that all five had lost weight.

"We will continue to fight crime," the Chechen official said. "We are not afraid of reprisals," he added, warning "operations against kidnappings will continue."

The authorities were hunting for 10 suspects thought linked to the Poles' abduction, adding that the same group may be behind a series of other kidnappings in the lawless Caucasus republic.

The five Poles, who are being debriefed by Chechen security officials in Grozny, will shortly be handed over to a Polish diplomat in the Chechen capital, Mr. Khutlugin added.

The Caritas aid workers had brought food, medicine and furniture to the village, one of the hardest hit during Chechenya's war of independence from Russia.

In Moscow, Polish embassy spokesman Jacek Niedzielski told AFP: "We still have no confirmation, we're trying to confirm it." Mr. Niedzielski said he had "no information" on whether

a ransom had been paid, and was unaware of any ransom demand having been made by the kidnappers. Warsaw said in early January it would refuse to hold ransom negotiations with the kidnappers.

Although Chechenya remains nominally a part of the Russian Federation, Grozny won de facto independence in a bitter 21-month war during which Chechen fighters inflicted a series of humiliating defeats on the numerically superior and better-equipped Russian troops, which forced Moscow to sue for peace.

The republic remains unstable despite the signing of a peace treaty last May, and continues to be plagued by ransom kidnappings.

The problem is in large part caused by the vast quantities of arms which flooded the republic during the war and because of intense clan rivalries.

Foreign aid workers have been increasingly targeted by armed gangs operating in Russia's unruly Caucasus region.

Vincent Cochetel, U.N. refugee agency mission chief for the Northern Caucasus, was seized from his home in the North Ossetian capital Vladikavkaz on Jan. 29 and has not been heard from since.

Two Hungarians, two Britons, a German, a Yugoslav and two Russian Orthodox Church aid workers remain missing after being grabbed in Chechenya or neighbouring republics.

Last November four French hostages, including three members of the French aid group Equilibre, were released following negotiations between the hostage-takers and the Chechen authorities.

Equilibre has denied paying a ransom for the trio, who were grabbed in the neighbouring republic of Dagestan.



Chinese dissident Wang Bingzhang, who has resided in California, U.S. for more than 10 years, is shown in this file picture taken when Wang gave a lecture in the U.S. in 1989 (Reuters photo)

Flight recorder of Philippines jet found

CAGAYAN DE ORO, Philippines (AFP) — Search teams have found the flight data recorder that could hold the key to why a Philippine jet slammed into a mountain a week ago killing all 104 people on board, officials said Monday.

"It is confirmed to be the flight data recorder," said Rodolfo Avila, an Air Transportation Office (ATO) official, after earlier reports said it was the cockpit voice recorder that had been located at the remote crash site on Mount Samagaya in the southern Philippines.

The recorder, one of the aircraft's two "black boxes," was flown to the ATO office in Manila and will be taken to Canada for analysis, Mr. Avila said.

Saturnino de la Cruz, of the ATO flight safety board, said the instrument would be examined by Canadian Civil Aviation authorities and "maybe within a week's time we can get a read out" of the information.

Search teams found the recorder Sunday amid wreckage and human remains in dense jungle at the site of the Feb. 2 crash, officials said.

ATO officials said they had yet to find the cockpit voice recorder, which will hold everything said by the pilot and co-pilot in the 30 minutes before the plane hit the mountain, apparently exploding on impact.

Aviation experts hope the two recorders will reveal why the 31-year old plane ploughed into the jungle-covered summit killing 99 passengers and five crew on board.

A U.S. aviation expert here to assist the investigation said the data recorder would provide information on the plane's altitude, speed, heading and engine power.

"In general what the pilot sees is what the flight data

records," the expert said. As investigators began their work in earnest, about 200 searchers at the crash site continued to collect human remains and wreckage and hunt for the elusive cockpit voice recorder.

Senior presidential aide Jesus Duran, who is in charge of the search, said Monday that more than 50 body bags with human remains had been collected for analysis by forensic experts.

Several other bags containing valuables of some of the crash victims have also been brought down, including 86 necklaces and 42 bracelets along with a few wallets stuffed with peso bills and some with dollars.

Mr. Duran added that recovery teams would continue to "fine comb" the area including a creek, not yet searched, where team members would proceed "shoulder to shoulder" to retrieve body parts.

Officials would not give a count of how many victims have been positively identified nor release their names.

Forensic experts, however, said the process of identifying the mangled body parts could take up to six months, even with recourse to fingerprints and dental records.

Part of the identification process would also include showing family members pictures of body parts to avoid having them view actual remains now stored in two refrigerated vans, Mr. Duran said.

Some of the victims, aviation officials have said, have already identified through identity cards and pieces of clothing.

Among those killed in the crash were five children and five foreign nationals — an Australian, an Austrian, a Japanese, a Swiss and an American.

Further arrests make future of detained Chinese dissident bleak

BEIJING (AFP) — The fate of a U.S.-based democracy activist detained in China looked bleak Monday as police swooped on contacts he had met in Shanghai and overseas dissidents revealed he had been working to establish an opposition political party.

"Part of the reason why Wang Bingzhang went back to China was to talk to people about setting up a Justice Party to fight for democracy," exiled dissident Fu Shengqi said in a telephone interview from New York. "He was also planning to distribute a book he wrote called 'A handbook for the Democratic Movement'."

Mr. Fu, who identified himself as a spokesman for the Justice Party and said it had been under preparation overseas for more than a year.

Beijing does not permit the establishment of new political parties and has jailed those who challenge it with the crime of attempting to overthrow the government.

Following Wang Bingzhang's detention Friday in the eastern

province of Bengbu, along with a 43-year-old maths teacher named Wang Tingjin, a third activist Zhang Rujun was detained in Shanghai Sunday.

"The police in Shanghai said that no one who had contact with Wang Bingzhang will be released," his wife Wang Feng said.

"I have no idea where they are holding him," she added.

Monday, a fourth activist, Yang Qinheng, 44, was taken away from his Shanghai home by the police, his nephew said.

Wang Bingzhang's younger brother, who lives in Canada, confirmed fears from the exiled dissident community that Mr. Wang did not hold U.S. citizenship although he had lived there for most of the past 16 years and would therefore face a much stiffer penalty from the Chinese authorities.

In a similar detention case in 1995, human rights activist Harry Wu was convicted of spying, but because he was a naturalised U.S. citizen he was immediately expelled from China and did not serve his

15-year term. Mr. Wang, 50, entered China from Macau on Jan. 23, prompting a large-scale manhunt and a general police order to arrest him since he was on a black list of activists to be refused entry into China. For 15 days he slipped through the net, meeting dissidents in Shanghai and Nanjing. He then moved north to Bengbu where he was caught by police and placed in detention on Feb. 6.

Mr. Wang's parents, who live in Canada, issued an appeal Monday to Chinese President Jiang Zemin to release their son and let him leave the country. Domestic activists also called for his immediate release, saying he had done nothing illegal and was entitled to return home and speak to anyone he liked.

"As Wang Bingzhang is a Chinese citizen he has the right to return home and this cannot be repealed," said Nanjing-based veteran activist Xu Shuiliang, whose pro-democracy activities date back to the Democracy Wall movement in the late 1970s.

"I hope the Chinese gov-

ernment will quickly release Wang Bingzhang and abolish its black list of activists not allowed to return," he said, adding that he had met Mr. Wang before his detention. Two student activists involved in the Tiananmen Square demonstrations of 1989 also added their support to Mr. Wang.

Wang Youcai and Cheng Fan issued a statement urging Beijing to release their prisoner and to allow democracy activists overseas to return home.

"Wang Bingzhang was very influential among students who were involved in the 1989 pro-democracy activities," said Mr. Wang, who now lives in the eastern city of Hangzhou. "I feel I have an obligation to assist him," he added.

Mr. Wang had not returned to China since 1978 when he went to Canada for postgraduate studies in medicine. He subsequently went to the United States where he set up the first overseas dissident organisation in 1982 called "Alliance for Democratic China" and then published a magazine called "China Spring."

Philippines, U.S. sign joint military exercise treaty

MANILA (AFP) — Manila and Washington Tuesday will sign an agreement on joint military exercises which has been held up for more than a year by a dispute over who has jurisdiction if U.S. personnel commit a crime in the Philippines, an official said here Monday.

The draft Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA), negotiated for over a year, provides for the treatment of United States defence personnel stationed temporarily

in the Philippines in case they commit a crime.

"The VFA will not give immunity to the Americans," said a Philippine foreign department official who asked not to be named.

"There will be no jurisdictional void. Either one of U.S. will ensure that justice will prevail," he said.

Official sources said the agreement provides for erring Americans to be dealt with by authorities here if they break

Philippine law. The U.S. government would have jurisdiction if a U.S. law is violated.

In cases where the laws of both countries are violated, the treaty has provisions to determine which country will have jurisdiction over the case, the sources said without elaborating.

The treaty is to be signed by Foreign Secretary Domingo Siazon and U.S. Ambassador to Manila Thomas Hubbard, the for-

ign ministry said.

Manila and Washington cancelled annual joint military exercises in 1995 over a dispute on who had jurisdiction if U.S. troops committed criminal offences during the war games. U.S. forces vacated major facilities at Subic Naval Base and Clark Air Base near here in 1992 after the Philippine Senate refused to renew a military bases treaty. But the two sides remain bound by a 1951 mutual defence treaty.

Prince Charles in Himalayan kingdom for sightseeing

NEW DELHI (AFP) — Britain's Prince Charles arrived Monday in the remote mountain kingdom of Bhutan on a four-day visit, where his engagements will mainly be trekking and sightseeing, embassy officials here said.

The prince, who was met by Foreign Minister Dawu Tsering, flew in after visiting Sri Lanka and Nepal.

He is due to meet King Jigme Singye Wangchuk Tuesday, and will also "go trekking and sightseeing", a spokesman for the Bhutanese embassy said.

The spokesman said Prince Charles flew to the Paro district of the state Monday and would later visit the capital Thimpu.

"The prince will also visit a seventh century Buddhist temple Monday and watch archery, Bhutan's national sport. He will also visit a fortress in Paro district," the spokesman said.

Bhutan, a monarchy without a written constitution, is situated in the eastern Himalayas bordered by China on one side and India on the other. It was opened to foreign tourists only in 1974.

Bhutan joined the United Nations in 1971 and the Non-Aligned Movement in 1973. In 1983 it became a founder member of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation.

Representatives of Bhutan's United Democratic Front (UDF) and the Appeal Movement Coordinating Council (AMCC) presented a petition to the prince on behalf of 100,000 destitute Bhutanese refugees in Nepal.

They have been settled in seven camps run by the UNHCR since being expelled from Bhutan in the late 1980s. Meanwhile, Nepalese officials hailed his visit saying it

had "further cemented the Britain-Nepal bilateral relations and also renewed the ties between the monarchies of the two countries."

"The visit of Prince Charles will help to woo more British tourists visiting Nepal in future," a foreign ministry official said.

During his trip, the heir to the British throne opened an information service at the British Council and visited several British-aided schools and Gurkha villages.

He was the guest of King Birendra and Queen Aishwarya at their resort in Pokhara and met late Sunday with senior cabinet officials including Nepalese Prime Minister S.B. Thapa and Foreign Minister Kamal Thapa.

During the meeting Mr. Thapa raised the issue of the low pensions paid to Gurkhas who fought in the British army compared with the funds paid to retired British servicemen.

Mr. Thapa said the prince's response was "positive" without elaborating.

Gurkha soldiers presented a statement to Prince Charles including a plea for residential visas in Britain, educational facilities for their children and increment of their pension on a par with British nationals.

The prince also visited a welfare centre for destitute Nepalese women, where 150 women rescued from Indian brothels and young orphans have been resettled.

Fourteen of the women are HIV positive and Prince Charles talked to one woman who had been sexually exploited when she was just seven years old.

Prince Charles will return to Kathmandu to change planes before heading back to Britain.

Nigerian-led force steps up pressure on Freetown

FREETOWN (AFP) — A Nigerian-led intervention force Monday stepped up military pressure on Sierra Leone's capital, with reports that the soldiers were approaching Freetown on three fronts after fighting troops of the junta.

Commanders of the Nigerian-led ECOMOG force, who are determined to unseat the military regime, claimed their troops held positions on three main routes approaching the peninsula capital.

They said that on the more easterly of these routes, troops were just five miles from the city, between Wellington and Kissy.

Junta sources said heavy fighting at Wellington continued through Sunday night and was causing civilian casualties. The latest clashes around the capital began Thursday. Both sides blame the other for provoking hostilities which violated a ceasefire agreed last October in an accord whereby

junta leader Lieutenant Colonel Johnny Paul Koroma agreed in principle to step down by April 22. However, he has since said that a deadline could not be met.

A clandestine radio station which supports the return of elected President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah — ousted in the May coup which prompted the deployment of thousands of ECOMOG troops in Sierra Leone — the intervention force was "approaching the capital on three fronts."

The radio said ECOMOG troops had reached the mountainous village of Regent, some seven miles south of the capital on the central of the three parallel access roads and that troops were also present on the Peninsular Route, which lies to the west.

But junta defence spokesman Lieutenant Colonel John Milton said his men were still putting up resistance in the areas in question.

"The fighting is heavy and civilians are being evacuated from their homes at Calabar Town and Wellington," said Lt. Col. Milton.

"Civilian casualties are on the increase and properties demolished," he said, without elaborating.

Heavy gunfire could be heard Sunday evening at Regent, where a road into the capital splits in to two routes, but the noise had died down by Monday morning.

It was unclear who held the village as journalists trying to get there from Freetown were turned back by junta troops and travellers trying from the south were blocked by ECOMOG troops.

"We don't know who is active inside the village itself," one pensioner who was among those refused access to the village said.

Details of casualties remain sketchy, with no reliable update Friday's figure of 10 civilians killed in the fighting.

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Reaching point of no return

IN CONTRAST to the war launched against Iraq in the wake of its invasion and occupation of Kuwait in 1990, the military preparations this time lack the full support of international community. Absent at this time is a clear-cut objective around which the comity of nations can rally. In 1991, there was overwhelming Arab support for ending the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait and punishing the Iraqi regime for its attempt to annex a sovereign and independent Arab state. This time, there is really no strong cause to rally the Arab World against Iraq.

The implementation of U.N. Security Council resolutions is not an immediate or pressing issue on which the Arab Nation can mobilise against a sister Arab country, especially at a time when many other Security Council resolutions remain unfulfilled and disregarded. The Arab capitals cannot be expected to be impressed with the sudden call for the implementation of international legitimacy, because a weaker and defenceless Iraq is anathema to Arab national security. Most Arab capitals have quarrels with Iraq's leadership and its management of the country's affairs, not over Baghdad's possession of weapons of mass destruction, since such weapons have already been introduced to the region by Israel.

On the international level, there is an absence of consensus in the Security Council, unlike the case in 1991. Three permanent members of the council — Russia, France and China — are on record as either opposed to military strikes against Iraq or having strong reservations under the current circumstances. A similar disarray exists among the non-permanent members of the council. Moreover, only a handful of countries outside the Security Council club have endorsed the need for the resort to a military solution to the standoff with Baghdad over free and unimpeded access for U.N. inspectors to all sites in Iraq. Even Pope John Paul II is vehemently opposed to a military strike.

The absence of a clear vision or strategy behind the recent escalation in the Gulf region is also troubling to Arab and non-Arab countries. Military strikes, no matter how devastating, may not succeed in putting an end to non-conventional bombs that Iraq allegedly still possesses. Equally important is that the declared objective of the military strike would not be meant to change the Iraqi regime. So what is the objective? A devastated Iraq? More suffering for the Iraqi people who have already suffered enough under more than seven years of sanctions? Not to mention the risk of causing widespread civil strife, famine, and even divisions that could lead to the partition of the Arab country?

There is no doubt that the military preparations have developed a momentum of their own and a strike may have become irreversible even if Iraq made all the necessary concessions that are required of it. Washington and London cannot deploy such a massive force in the air and in the sea indefinitely and at a high cost. The U.S. and Britain cannot reassemble their forces everytime Baghdad makes a manoeuvre to end the sanctions. That is why the conflict appears to be coming to a head, albeit not under the circumstances that Washington and London may have hoped for.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

Al Ra'i's Fahed Faneh criticised the motion submitted by 23 deputies seeking a vote of no confidence for Minister of State for Information Affairs Samir Mutawi for allowing Jordan Television to broadcast the Arab Song Festival organised by Orbit Satellite Station. He said the song festival has brought some joy to the Jordanian people who are overburdened with political, social and economic woes and was welcomed by the majority of people in the Kingdom. Had the 23 deputies submitted a motion demanding that the government cancel its amendments to the 1993 Press and Publications Law to allow the 13 weeklies to publish again they would have won the support of the public. Dr. Faneh said. But he said these deputies seem to be unaware of the facts and the realities of the situation in Jordan where people like to live in a democracy and enjoy freedom. These deputies who claim to have been disturbed by Orbit broadcasters presenting the show claim that women were improperly dressed and were presenting the festival's programmes, Dr. Faneh said. He said this claim is totally false because viewers at home claim otherwise. He said Jordan Television continues to present viewers with movies and television programmes of all kinds, and there have been no complaints. According to Dr. Faneh, the Orbit festival was truly a cultural event which should be admired as helped to attract tourists to Jordan.

Al Dustour's Oreib Rintawi criticised Syria for its present stand vis-a-vis the Iraq crisis saying Damascus is satisfying itself with statements that it does not support a military strike against Baghdad. According to Rintawi, while Syria raised a hue and cry over Jordan's sending a sole army officer to observe limited Turkish-Israeli military exercises, it is keeping silent over the current flurry of military activity against Iraq. The writer charged that it is because the regime in Damascus harbours hatred towards the Baghdad regime that Syria decided to join Iran in an alliance against Baghdad during the first Gulf war and to join the U.S.-led coalition against Baghdad in the second Gulf war. Rintawi said that Damascus moved slightly towards improving its ties with Baghdad only when the latter's relations with Jordan began to show some strains and in a bid to open markets for Syrian products in Iraq. The writer said the lack of confidence between Damascus and Baghdad continues to help the enemies of the Arab Nation hatch conspiracies against not only Iraq but also Syria and the other Arab countries.

View from the Fourth Circle

From Rachel's tomb to the passage of the slaves in Gaza

By Rami G. Khouri

GAZA — Everything that is good and bad about the ongoing Oslo peace process between Palestinians and Israelis is quickly obvious to the visitor to Gaza, which has emerged, along with the West Bank town of Ramallah, as the unofficial joint capital of the unofficial Palestinian state.

The gains, disappointments, and indignities of the peace process to date are delicately balanced in the minds of most Palestinians.

After a week of intensive discussions with Palestinians in Gaza, Jerusalem, Ramallah, Bethlehem and other places in the West Bank and Gaza, I sensed a slight momentum towards greater skepticism among most Palestinians, though directed at slightly different targets: ordinary citizens blame Israel along with the arrogance and corruption of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA), professionals and well-off members of the elite blame Israel and the unfairness of modern history, PNA officials blame Israel and the United States.

Beneath the verbal expressions of deep political discontent and the real pain of stubborn economic distress, however, is a more positive parallel reality: for the first time in modern history, several million Palestinians are getting on with the business of building their own country, establishing their own institutions, taking charge of their own lives, charting their own future.

To be rid of the Israeli occupation — both its petty humiliations and more serious large-scale land expropriations — is a tremendous and still valuable gain to those Palestinians living in the PNA areas.

But this gain is being increasingly diluted or even offset in the minds of many Palestinians by several related problems: the poor state of the economy, the political autocracy of the PNA and many of its institutions and officials, the hard-line Israeli policy on further withdrawals and re-deployments, the continued Israeli expansion of settlements, destruction of Palestinian homes and confiscation of lands, and the perceived indifference of the world to this difficult situation in which many Palestinians find themselves.

Perhaps most troubling for Palestinians is the colonial and apartheid-like nature of the situation in which they find themselves today — combined with the frightening thought that the present difficult transitional phase may, in fact, turn out to be a long-term option for Israel and the world, regardless of what the Palestinians themselves may think of it. The many personal, economic and political manifestations of the ugly colonial relationship between Israel and Palestine are felt daily by every Palestinian. The situation is most visible in the many checkpoints and roadblocks that physically separate Israelis and Palestinians, the whites and blacks of God's increasingly odd holy land. Palestinians move around according to the Israeli-Palestinian version of the former South African pass laws. Palestinians who do not have

the proper identity card or permit think twice about going into Israeli-controlled areas; Israelis, also victims of the pass laws mentality in their own way, generally do not venture into Palestinian areas.

The glaring parallels with South Africa of the past are awkward and uncomfortable — for both sides — and probably have been exacerbated in the short term by the Oslo peace process.

Most striking in this respect is the physical separation of these two communities that live in such close proximity and share so many cultural, moral and historical dimensions of their lives. The Jewish colonies and settlements in the West Bank and Gaza appear even more alien and intrusive, with their separate roads, many guards, and a social-architectural character so obviously exogenous to this predominantly Arab land.

Not surprisingly, the most recent flare-up of Israeli-Palestinian violence occurs nowadays around Rachel's tomb in Bethlehem. This otherwise holy site now also has a new dimension that is a moral and political disgrace, disfigured by a new large stone wall, traffic detours, check points and many Israeli armed guards on the ground and on rooftops, separating it from the local Palestinian population. (It is ironic that when Rachel, Jacob's wife, first approached the land of Palestine, or Canaan, after the journey from Mesopotamia, the local "prince of the land" Hamor the Hivite and his son Shechem said to the approaching Israelites, "you shall dwell with us and the land shall be open to you," and then said to their own people about the Israelites "... these men are friendly with us; let them live in the land and trade in it, for behold, the land is large enough for them" (Genesis 34:10-21).)

Today, it seems, the land is not large enough for two peoples, but the separation of Israelis and Palestinians is being attempted in an unbalanced manner that will trigger greater tension and violence in the near future, rather than long-term security and stability. This is most self-evident here in Gaza, where the population expresses bitter resentment against the cruel combination of Israeli and Palestinian self-indulgent arrogance of power. The two are very different in nature, for sure, yet similar in their consequences: ordinary Palestinians feel increasingly despondent, worried and helpless about their future well-being.

There is a long, covered passageway that tens of thousands of Palestinians walk through every day at the Erez crossing point between Gaza and Israel. The Palestinians call it "mamarr el-abeed", or "the passage of the slaves (or, the blacks)".

It is not surprising that Palestine is about the only place in the Arab World that has seen some spontaneous demonstrations of grassroots support for the Iraqi leadership in its current face-off with the U.S. People who see themselves as slaves will act like slaves. They have nothing

or little to lose, and their situation cannot get much worse; thus even war in the region is seen by some as a possible portent of change for the better.

More patient Palestinians recognise that their lives have improved somewhat with the Oslo peace process, and that the change under way towards a sovereign Palestinian state is long-term by nature. They argue that they will not forever suffer the current harsh conditions of apartheid-like separation, confinement, roads for whites only, and regimes of travel permits and identity cards. They point to the many Palestinian institutions that are being born daily, the growing control they enjoy over their lives, the revitalisation of Palestinian cultural identity, and other signs of a national community being reconstituted and a state being born.

Many argue that Palestine is no better or worse than other Arab or Third World countries, and that the yardstick of measurement and comparison should be realism, not idealism or jingoism.

There are no absolutes in Palestine today, no clear communal agreement on whether things are mostly good or bad, improving or deteriorating.

The Oslo process has more public critics than supporters; but in the quiet, dogged determination of their everyday lives most Palestinians work hard to extract equitable benefits from a rather unbalanced and burdensome political process.

Most people in Palestine, ordinary folks and members of the elite alike, share a sense of disappointment; they feel unable to impact more directly on the birth of the state of Palestine and the attainment of Palestinian communal and national rights for which they have struggled for much of this century. It is not clear if this disappointment will turn to rage, violence and instability, directed at the PNA and Israel, or if it will spur Palestinians to greater diligence and efficacy in their internal governance and their dealings with Israel and the Arab World.

Despite their difficult, apartheid-like, daily life context, for the first time in modern history the Palestinians themselves can influence the future direction of their national condition, rights and aspirations. For this reason, I suspect, those Palestinians who see their glass as half full will ultimately prevail over those who see it as half empty.

The passage of the slaves, like serfdom, colonialism, and apartheid elsewhere, is a fleeting phenomenon, doomed to give way to the righteous political morality of those whose hearts and lands are big enough to find room for their brothers and neighbours. What we witness today in Palestine and Israel is a dramatic lesson in how not to achieve this goal; perhaps we must pass through this experience in order to find the alternative route towards equal rights and coexistence, so that Rachel can finally rest in peace, and all her Arab and Israeli Semitic cousins can aspire to justice and peace while they are still alive.

The green parrots of Ankara and other displaced persons

By Dr. A. Clare Brandabur

WALKING IN Ankara one late September day in 1995, I suddenly noticed a great green bird sitting quietly at about shoulder height in the shrubbery. My immediate assumption was that someone's pet parrot had escaped, and I looked to see if the bird's leg was banded. On reflection I decided not to disturb this regal creature and went on my way to meet a friend for lunch near the mausoleum of Kemal Ataturk.

Only a few days later I saw another of these stunning birds, flying into the trees not far from the British embassy in Cankaya. I remarked on this peculiar sighting to a Turkish colleague at Middle East Technical University and learned that Ankara had of late acquired a fairly large colony of these exotic birds: the war in the east had driven them many hundreds of miles westward to the safety of the capital and the forest which surrounds the imposing memorial to the founder of modern Turkey.

"Don't feel sorry for them," my friend advised with a wry smile. "They are merely economic migrants."

These memories came back to me with great force recently when I read of the hundreds of refugees fleeing from Turkey in unseaworthy ships, robbed and shipwrecked and starving, desperate to reach the safety of Italy and perhaps to find a new life in western Europe. BBC interviewed a family in the shanty towns of Istanbul whose village, like over 3,000 others, has been demolished by the Turkish military, the livestock driven away or herded into trucks, the men shot or rounded up and imprisoned, the houses and

outbuildings burned, the women and children left to go on foot to the nearest city with scarcely more than the clothes on their backs.

Adana, Mersin, Diyarbakir, Ankara, Izmir, and of course Istanbul are inundated with thousands of these migrants, for whom there are no adequate social services, no jobs, and no future. Who are they? Many of them are Kurds, though it is a crime in Turkey to name them ("Mountain Turks" was the chosen euphemism for many years). And journalists who dare to talk about the reality of the Kurdish plight, in Turkey, Iraq, Iran, and elsewhere, find themselves in prison. I remember seeing the mayor of one of these destroyed villages interviewed on Turkish television, where he clearly identified the attackers of his village as Turkish military in uniform. His body was found a few days later. Yet Turkey becomes indignant when it is suggested that these people are political refugees: they are, we are asked to believe, simply economic migrants — which suggests they are opportunists who merely want larger refrigerators and fancier cars!

About the same year I read about a professor of sociology who had just been released from prison after having served several years on charges of endangering national security because of his book tracing the plight of the Kurds to the failure of Kemal Ataturk to honour the promises made to them at the time of the war of national liberation. This scholar argued that while it was expedient, Turks and Kurds were urged to fight to drive out the Greeks, the Italians, and the British, to consolidate a new diminished Turkish state. All for one and one for all, the Kurds fought valiantly beside their Turkish brothers. Yet

when the war was won and the dust cleared, the new constitution of Turkey was drafted with no mention of Kurdish rights, Kurdish language or Kurdish culture: they were expected to learn Turkish and assimilate into the melting pot, forgetting that they were a distinct people with an ancient history and a unique tradition and language. Occasionally Kurdish newspapers are given licences only to find their offices closed down and their papers confiscated soon after.

The journalist who interviewed this courageous sociologist asked him whether or not he had continued to hold those beliefs for which he had been imprisoned. Yes, he answered, and his first act on being released had been to communicate this point of view urgently to President Demirel. He remained convinced that only if this history was understood could the modern Turkish administration effectively address the problem and draft legislation which would give Kurdish citizens their human and civic rights. He felt strongly that the violence of the PKK would never diminish unless and until the basic problem of Kurdish rights in the Turkish state were admitted and established officially and legally. Oddly, he pointed out with a kind of resigned amusement, his book had not been banned — only its author!

The book had not been imprisoned though its author had! And what were his plans? He said he expected to be sent back to prison as an unrepentant menace to the peace and tranquility of the nation — as indeed he was. Because it is a crime in Turkey to suggest that Kemal Ataturk could have made a mistake, these useful and intelligent ideas were refused and the author, like any one else who

dares to champion the Kurdish people or even suggest that they are the victims of a massive Viet Nam style campaign, was sentenced to prison.

To his great credit, Turkey's most famous novelist Yasar Kemal, has spoken out fearlessly on behalf of his people: for this support of a democratic society, he has been charged with "separatist propaganda" and recently took refuge in Sweden, not for the first time in his life. Anyone who has read the Cukurova Trilogy: The Wind from the Plain, Iron Earth — Copper Sky, and The Undying Grass, is aware of Kemal's love for his country and would be immediately disposed to accept his statement that most Turkish Kurds do not want a separate state but only to have their cultural heritage recognised and allowed to flourish in Turkey.

The Kurdish community in Turkey suffers from a common contemporary phenomenon: the destruction and/or dispersal of ethnic communities considered expendable by some of the great powers. To resist such destruction, the freedom fighter swims in the sea of the people, but authoritarian regimes no longer struggle to destroy the sea. In Algeria, in Guatemala, in Chile, in Mexico, in Palestine, as in Turkey, whole villages and neighbourhoods are being attacked, destroyed, besieged, to crush resistance with the aim of expropriating land and destroying the fabric of indigenous communities. In the case of Iraq, it is the whole country that is being embargoed. And when people, like the green parrots, flee from this assault, they are called "economic migrants." Let's call this the new world disorder.

Entangled in fears

To the editor:

ALTHOUGH I have vehemently disagreed with Rami G. Khouri in the past (particularly over Iraq) I always find his articles fascinating, illuminating and incisive. However, in his last article he surpassed himself. In my relatively brief time here in Jordan I have not read a better article than his piece on "Visiting the Holocaust Museum, and beyond" (Jordan Times, Jan. 27).

Anyone who sincerely wants a dignified peace be they Arab or Jew, Palestinian or Israeli or anyone else should read his article, because without exaggeration he passionately wrote about the depths of wounds — on both sides — that must be healed. It reminded me of something David K. Shipley wrote in his book Arab and Jews:

"...the future guarantees that Arabs and Jews will remain close neighbours in this weary land, entangled in each others' fears. They will not escape from one another. They will not find peace in treaties, or in victories. They will find it, if at all, by looking into each others' eyes."

I wish the Israeli government would reopen their eyes and look at those around them as their predecessors did so courageously.

Lawrence J. Dearing
 Amman

LETTERS

Hypocrisy in democracy

To the editor:

I READ with utter dismay the articles in our daily newspapers regarding the heated debate over the "decency" of the Third Arab Song Festival. It is bewildering to witness such hypocrisy in what is claimed to be a democratic country. A total of 23 deputies joined forces to shun the endless efforts of the Minister of Information and Jordan Television to broadcast live and for the first time in Jordan such a festival and to cater to the needs and requests of the Jordanian citizens. Jordan was privileged enough to host such a festival. Is this how we repay this honour? Was anyone chained to their seat and forced to watch this broadcast festival till the late hours of the night? I advise these deputies to exercise their right to choose whether to watch this festival or not and whether to turn on their satellites or not.

Name withheld upon request

'Railroading practices'

To the editor:

YESTERDAY I had the misfortune of attending the General Assembly meeting of the Amman Chamber of Industry (ACI). As soon as the meeting started we were asked to vote on a statement prepared by the ACI stipulating the rejection of the establishment of other chambers of industries, backing the new law prepared by the ACI, and a recommendation to set up a committee to discuss the above. This statement was read and not given to us in writing to allow us to read and digest it before voting on its content. This has been done before, and frankly I believe that it was an insult to the intelligence of all the people gathered; it also demonstrates once more the constant railroading practices applied by ACI and why some people decided to split the union of the industry in Jordan.

I believe a committee should be set up that includes all affiliations of the industry, including the ministry, which will study and recommend the best way to go forward whether it is with a number of chambers or one chamber only. We should not accept to participate in a committee where the results of its findings are predetermined. May God help us.

Marwan Nassar
 General Manager
 Jordan Rubber Industries

January 10, 1998
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Aviation authority announces five-year JD63m modernisation plan

AMMAN (Petra) — The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) plans to spend JD63 million between 1998 and 2002 to develop the air transport and civil aviation sector and adjust to the requirements of the economic, technological and social developments in the air transport industry, according to Jasser Ziyad, CAA director general.

In a statement released Monday, Capt. Ziyad said the five-year development plan is needed to meet the needs of the approximately 27 international airlines, as well as Jordan's national air carrier and passengers from around the world, currently using the facilities at the Kingdom's airports.

He said the plan takes the requirements of air transport services in the coming century into consideration and aims at modernising services and providing training to Jordanian personnel involved in the industry.

According to Capt. Ziyad, JD29.91 million out of the total will be used to modernise security, air conditioning, lighting, and water systems, as well as elevators and maintenance and other services at the Queen Alia International Airport.

This allocation, he added, will also be spent on maintaining roads and runways within the airport's perimeter.

More than JD3.4 million is to be spent on facilities at the Amman Civil Airport at Marka in eastern Amman. This sum will be used to modernise and increase the efficiency of air navigation systems, modernise equipment and machinery, and train personnel, according to Capt. Ziyad.

Nearly JD8.5 million will be used to modernise the Amman airport's passenger lounge, the runways, the water network system, and the high voltage electric power system.

More than JD21 million has been allocated for CAA employee training and consulting services, as well as replacing furniture and installing a computer network, Capt. Ziyad added.

He pointed out that the CAA's annual revenues from services offered to the various airlines are estimated at JD35 million this year, while the CAA's budget for 1998 has been fixed at JD4.2 million.

Capt. Ziyad said a team of air transport experts is expected in Amman from the U.S. in the coming few days to revise the five-year plan and offer consulting services financed by the U.S. trade and development agency.

Egypt returns remains of two Israeli soldiers killed in 1973 war

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Egypt has returned the remains of two Israeli soldiers killed during the 1973 Israeli-Arab war, army radio reported on Monday.

The skeletal remains were found in the Sinai desert and were handed over in recent days to General Shimon Hertz, military aide to President Ezer Weizman, the radio said.

The army plans to send the remains to London for genetic testing to confirm they are among the 18 Israeli soldiers, four of them pilots, who went missing on Egyptian battlefields during the war, the radio said.

Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak agreed to return the soldiers' remains during a meeting last year with Mr. Weizman in Alexandria, the radio said.

'Non-terrorist' killings up 60 per cent in Israel — police

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Criminal murders unrelated to the Israeli-Arab conflict soared 60 per cent in Israel last year, according to police figures published on Monday.

During the 12-month period, 217 people were killed in Israel, 192 of them in what the police described as "non-terrorist" events. This represents a 60 per cent increase in civil murders over 1996 when there were 189 killings, 120 of them non-terrorist, police said.

Twenty-one of those killed last year in Arab attacks died in two suicide bombings by Islamists in Jerusalem in July and September.

Among the civilian murders were 16 women slain by their husbands or companions, a record in Israel, the police report said.

In 50 per cent of those cases, the woman had filed a prior complaint against her partner with police, it said.

Quake hits western Iran, no casualties reported

TEHRAN (R) — An earthquake measuring 4.4 on the Richter scale shook western Iran on Monday, but there were no initial reports of casualties, the official IRNA news agency said.

The agency said the earthquake's epicentre was in a suburb of the provincial capital of Khoranabad, Lorestan, 370 km southwest of Tehran.

"No reports of damage or injuries have been received so far," IRNA said. The earthquake was reported at 9:04 local time.

Earthquakes measuring between four and five are powerful enough to cause heavy damage in a populated area. Iran has been hit by three major earthquakes in the past year.

Iranian man goes mad after receiving 'big money'

TEHRAN (AFP) — A poor Iranian villager lost his mind after winning a relatively large sum of money in a court case, a newspaper reported Monday.

The man, who was not identified, received five million rials (\$1,000) in cash as "blood money" in compensation for the death of his sister in a car accident, Resalat newspaper said.

The man, "who had never seen more than 300,000 rials (\$60) in one sum in his life," lost his mind after seeing the blood money handed out to him in small denomination bills.

His relatives in the western city of Hamedan told the paper that they had so far spent two million rials of the money to cure him, but to no avail.

Jordan will not support military action against Iraq — Monarch

(Continued from page 1)

the consequences. I am afraid that we are not far away from this situation."

The King said that an Arab summit should also tackle the peace process deadlock in addition to the Iraq-U.N. crisis. "Concerning an Arab summit I don't know what subjects are to be discussed but I think there is more than one topic: the Palestinian question, the stalled peace process which is very serious, and the crisis at hand which I hope will be addressed not with the use of force. Our contacts are continuing with Egypt and with other Arab countries to organise a meeting and pursue dialogue and objective discussion so that we can achieve the aspired results."

In his forty five minute meeting with the British premier at Downing Street, the two sides con-

ducted a comprehensive evaluation of the regions developments focusing on the stalled peace process and intensifying efforts to give it momentum to end the present deadlock.

Mr. Blair who stressed the need for both parties to fulfil the agreements noted that the European Union (EU) has urged the Israeli government to implement the redeployment plan without prior conditions. Mr. Blair expressed EU desire to play an effective role in support of U.S. efforts in this regard.

King Hussein and Mr. Blair agreed to follow up consultations and contacts over the peace process. They also agreed that there should be no double standard positions regarding Security Council resolutions, otherwise this would adversely affect the peace process.

U.S. denies plans for Kurdish state in Iraq

(Continued from page 1)

past had a personal friendship with Iraqi President Saddam Hussein, on Jan. 30 ruled out the use of an allied airbase in southern Turkey for U.S. air strikes against Iraq.

Shortly after Mr. Ecevit's announcement, conservative Prime Minister Mesut Yilmaz overrode his deputy and said Ankara would consider any U.S. proposal for the use of the Incirlik base for air strikes against Baghdad.

But Mr. Yilmaz said the Turkish parliament would rule whether or not to let Washington use the base.

A U.S.-led multinational force based at Incirlik staged extensive bombing missions against Iraqi targets during the Gulf war.

Turkey, which is fighting its own separatist Kurdish rebellion in the country's southeast, fears that the creation of a Kurdish state in neighbouring northern Iraq will set a dangerous precedent.

An estimated eight to 12 million Kurds live in Turkey, principally in the southeast. A further three million live in Iran, four million in northern Iraq under U.N. protection, and one million in Syria. There are also small Kurdish populations in the former Soviet Union.

An allied air force of U.S., British and Turkish planes using Incirlik has been monitoring northern Iraq since 1991 to prevent Baghdad from staging attacks against the Kurds in the country's north.

Mr. Ecevit also argued Monday that Iraqi President Saddam Hussein should be offered a face-saving way out of the current U.N. weapons inspections crisis.

"This region of the world is one where people commit crimes to preserve their dignity," Mr. Ecevit was quoted as saying by the newspaper Sabah.

"We would advise the U.S. authorities to offer Baghdad credible commitments on the lifting of the international embargo imposed on Iraq, so as to defuse the current crisis," Mr. Ecevit said.

NATO chief faces unwelcome Bosnia-Iraq linkage by U.S.

(Continued from page 1)

Europeans and decide to show their displeasure.

"But it's no good chopping off your left foot because you've got pain in your right foot," he added. In the end, unwelcome linkage would only prove damaging all round.

At the Munich forum, however, Arizona Republican Senator John McCain and his Virginia colleague John Warner insisted there was a direct relationship, in their own minds and those of their constituents, between the two issues. They warned that Congress would be watching how the European allies performed.

Although Chancellor Kohl has now assured the U.S. that his aircraft will be free to use their bases in Germany in the event of a strike against Iraq, only Britain among the NATO allies has pledged to fly alongside the Americans in the attack.

The French have ruled out any part in military action. President Clinton has acknowledged that air-strikes could not be expected to eradicate weapons of mass destruction which the West alleges the Iraqi president is still hiding. But the U.S. says bombing could "reduce or delay" his ability to use them.

Annan cancels Middle East tour, denies plans for trip to Baghdad

(Continued from page 1)

dent Saddam Hussein for his Syrian counterpart Hafez Al Assad.

Mr. Sahhaf, the first Iraqi foreign minister to visit Syria in nearly two decades, travelled to the Syrian capital by road, through the border which was opened last June.

The Iraqi foreign minister is also due to visit Cairo, Amman and other Arab capitals.

He denounced U.S. threats to launch a military strike against Iraq saying "the use of force has never produced results and those who think that they can bring about the partition of Iraq are fooling themselves and are even stupid."

He said "practical and serious" ideas were under discussion with Russia, France, Secretary-General Annan and the Arab League aimed at resolving the crisis.

Mr. Shara reaffirmed Syria's desire to see a diplomatic settlement to the crisis. "We are against any military action against Iraq and think that there is still time to resolve the problem through diplomatic efforts," he said.

"We have always supported the unity of Iraq and rejected any attack on its territorial integrity. We are working with our Arab brothers to ease the suffering of the Iraqi people," Mr. Shara said.

Britain on Monday released what it said was new information on chemical weapons which were in Iraq's arsenal at the time of the 1991 Gulf war.

Defence Secretary George Robertson told parliament Iraq may have possessed large quantities of a chemical warfare agent known as Agent 15, but there was no evidence the weapon was used.

"We have recently received intelligence indicating that, at the time of the Gulf war, Iraq may have possessed large quantities of a chemical warfare agent known as Agent 15," Mr. Robertson said.

"The immediate effects of exposure to Agent 15 would be likely to include: weakness, dizziness, disorientation and loss of co-ordination, amongst other symptoms," he added.

Arab League Secretary-General Esmat Abdul-Meguid, meanwhile, announced that the Iraqi president was offering to allow U.N. weapons inspectors into 68 disputed sites over a two-month period.

He said that Iraq had also asked that Mr. Annan designate a special commission to conduct searches at eight so-called presidential sites.

The U.S. turned down similar offers from Iraq's ambassador to the United Nations, Nizar Hamdon, on Sunday.

Britain said Monday that Iraq's latest proposal was "encouraging" but unacceptable since President Hussein was still imposing conditions.

A foreign office spokesman said: "We welcome indications that the pressure we are putting is encouraging Saddam Hussein to make new proposals but he is still imposing conditions and this is not acceptable."

It was "encouraging that he is concentrating his mind," but the spokesman said President Hussein still did not meet the requirements of U.N. resolutions.

Mr. Abdul Meguid held talks with President Hussein last week on his first visit to Baghdad since the 1991 Gulf war over Kuwait. Iraq has been largely isolated in the Arab World because of its invasion of the emirate in 1990.

"President Saddam Hussein informed me of his readiness to grant U.N. inspectors access to 68 sites — establishments and presidential palaces," the Arab League chief told a press conference in Cairo.

Based on the apparent compromise, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak plans to hold a three-way summit with Syria and Saudi Arabia aimed at containing the Iraq crisis, according to the London-based Arab newspaper Al Hayat.

President Mubarak is "coordinating his efforts with those by Russia and France in consultation with the United States," it said.

On the military front, U.S. Defence Secretary William Cohen said on arrival in Kuwait on the second leg of a Gulf tour that the United States has now deployed enough assets in the Gulf to launch an air war.

"The force will be sufficient to do what we have set out to do, that is to reduce his capacity" to build weapons of mass destruction, he told reporters.

He told a press conference later that President Hussein alone holds the key to a diplomatic solution to the crisis over U.N. inspections of his weapons arsenals.

"He can resolve it tomorrow by simply abiding by the [U.N.] resolutions" on granting full and unconditional access for weapons inspectors, Mr. Cohen told the press conference after talks with Kuwaiti leaders.

"It's very simple on his part. He holds the key to resolving the crisis diplomatically," said the defence secretary.

Mr. Cohen warned that "patience is not eternal, it is wearing thin," but declined to set a deadline for the diplomatic efforts aimed at averting a U.S.-led military attack on Iraq.

A new U.N. Security Council resolution would be "helpful, but not necessary in our judgement," he said, insisting that previous resolutions already authorise the use of force.

"We have sufficient assets to carry out any military option that is necessary," said Mr. Cohen. U.S. President Bill Clinton would decide if more firepower was required.

In a joint statement issued earlier in Jeddah after talks between Mr. Cohen and his Saudi counterpart, Prince Sultan Ben Abdul Aziz, the two countries called for a diplomatic solution but said it depended on the Iraqi president.

"We continue to hope that the crisis with Iraq will be resolved by diplomatic means," it said.

"But if Saddam Hussein refuses to comply with the United Nations Security Council resolutions, he alone will be responsible for the consequences of his actions," the statement warned.

In the face of Saudi opposition to a military strike, Mr. Cohen already said on Sunday that attacks would not be launched from Saudi soil, where around 100 of the 320 U.S. planes in the Gulf region are based.

On the plane to Kuwait, Mr. Cohen said his mission was "to enlighten a number of countries about what he [Hussein] is doing — many people are unaware about what he has been doing," in allegedly building weapons of mass destruction.

London, which has joined Washington in threatening Iraq with military force, was set to deploy eight Tornado bombers at a Kuwaiti air base on Monday as part of the U.S.-led buildup in the Gulf that includes two aircraft carriers.

With Kuwait's armed forces on alert and the emirate ordering gas masks in case of Iraqi retaliation, the British embassy advised the 4,000-strong British community living there to take "sensible precautions."

Britain has already sent three warships to the Gulf. The aircraft carrier HMS Invincible — which has 14 bombers and four Sea King attack helicopters — a frigate and a destroyer.

Despite its inferiority in terms of military technology, Iraq said Monday that it would thwart any U.S.-British attack.

"Our armed forces have completed their combat preparations to face up to a U.S.-British aggression on our country," Defence Minister Sultan Hashem Ahmad told the newspaper Nabd Al Shabab.

"The Iraqi army stands ready to protect our territory and our nation against its hate-filled enemies," the general said.

"Despite the technological superiority and sophisticated weaponry which the enemies possess, the Iraqis are certain they will be able to prevail because their cause is just."

U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright said Sunday that the Iraqi president had only "weeks" left to comply with U.N. resolutions on weapons inspections or face an American-led military strike.

Senior French envoy Bertrand Dufourcq, who carried a warning to Baghdad last week from French President Jacques Chirac about the dangers of ignoring U.N. arms resolutions, reported to Mr. Chirac on Monday on his mission.

The talks between Mr. Chirac and Mr. Dufourcq "enabled them to set the guidelines of how France will pursue its efforts in view of reaching a diplomatic solution to the crisis in accordance with Security Council resolutions," Mr. Chirac's spokeswoman Catherine Colonna said.

Foreign Minister Hubert Vedrine was also present at the meeting between Mr. Chirac and Mr. Dufourcq, who is secretary-general of the French foreign ministry, Ms. Colonna said.

Mr. Vedrine later met visiting Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Musa, and a French spokesman said they agreed on the need to find a diplomatic solution to the Gulf crisis.

Mr. Vedrine emerged from the hour-long meeting with Mr. Musa to declare: "We are not easing up on our efforts, quite the opposite. France is using every means to try to find a political and diplomatic solution to the crisis."

He emphasised that Cairo and Paris were "totally in agreement on this point."

Mr. Musa, for his part, stressed "the need to avoid a military operation and ensure that diplomatic efforts succeed" in a situation which he described as "dangerous."

Italian Prime Minister Romano Prodi has declined to state his government's position on a possible U.S. military strike against Iraq, as questions remained Monday over Rome's willingness to open its air bases to U.S. warplanes.

Newspapers on Monday reported Mr. Prodi's terse response to journalists' questions as to whether his government would respond favourably to any U.S. request to use the bases to launch strikes against Baghdad.

"I'm making no comment on that subject," Mr. Prodi said Sunday. He also refused to comment on the divisions within Europe over the use of military force against Iraq to end the showdown over U.N. weapons inspectors.

An informed political source on Sunday said Rome would not allow U.S. warplanes to use NATO air bases inside its territory, and was siding with Russia and France in urging a diplomatic solution to the crisis.

Turkey denies fresh incursion into Iraq

(Continued from page 1)

around 5,000 troops there since the latest operation in September and October.

Mr. Utkan said there were contingency plans to prevent a refugee exodus in the worst case, but added: "There is no such indication for an influx of displaced persons at this point."

"And currently there is no move or necessity" for an incursion, Mr. Utkan added.

In the event of a refugee influx, the Turkish military would be involved in a "humanitarian aid program," but this would not be through what could be described as the creation of a buffer zone inside northern Iraq, he said.

More than 500,000 Iraqi Kurds massed near the Turkish border in fear of retaliation by Baghdad troops following a failed Kurdish rebellion in the wake of the 1991 Gulf war.

"Apparently, the memories of that refugee exodus are still in our mind," Mr. Utkan said.

"There are ways to handle some 100 displaced persons, but if the number is 500,000, you have to take other measures," he said.

Northern Iraq is currently protected by an allied-mon-

itored no-fly zone imposed after Iraq's defeat in the war.

Representatives in Ankara of two major Iraqi Kurdish factions, the Kurdistan Democratic Party and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, told AFP last week that no refugee exodus was expected in the region, even in the case of U.S. strikes against Iraq.

Mr. Utkan also denied press reports that the U.S. was deploying Patriot surface-to-air missile systems to Turkey to avert possible Iraqi missile attacks. "There is no such move," he said.

Turkey is hesitant on whether to allow the United States to use an allied air base in the country's south for possible air strikes on Iraqi targets.

A U.S.-led multinational force made extensive use of the Incirlik base for air attacks against Iraq during the Gulf war.

"Personally, I don't think there will be a need for such a [U.S.] request," Mr. Utkan said.

Prime Minister Mesut Yilmaz said last week that in the event of a U.S. request for Incirlik's use, the Turkish parliament would issue a decision.

EU chief tells Israel, PNA to stop stalling implementation of accords

(Continued from page 1)

Mr. Santer dismissed questions about possible economic pressure on Israel by the European Union.

"I don't think that sanctions or pressure can save peace," he said.

President Arafat for his part said Israel must "implement what has been agreed upon. No more, no less."

He condemned the continued construction of Israeli settlements in occupied areas and Israel's refusal to permit the long-overdue opening of a Palestinian airport and seaport in Gaza and "safe passage" corridors between the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

"We are in need of the European efforts on all levels, by all means, to push forward the peace process and to protect peace," he said.

Mr. Santer and Mr. Arafat went on to visit the still empty airfield at the southern tip of the

Gaza Strip and the site for the proposed deep water port as well as other economic projects.

The EU official was scheduled to leave Israel Wednesday for Jordan, Lebanon and Syria. He visited Cairo before coming to Israel and the Palestine territories.

Zarqa industrialists remain defiant despite calls for unity

By Ghalia Alul
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The government said Monday it could not freeze the establishment of a new industrial chamber in Zarqa in line with demands by the Amman Chamber of Industry (ACI) to create a national structure to look after the recession-hit sector.

Industry and Trade Minister Hani Mulki said during a meeting with ACI members that his decision to authorize the establishment of a chamber in Zarqa was in line with the current law governing the operations of the 9,000-strong ACI.

But Dr. Mulki said his ministry supported moves by the ACI to draft a legislation that would provide for the creation of the Jordan Chamber of Industry, with offices in major cities across the Kingdom.

Many in the chamber suggested the move to go around what they perceive as government plans to decentralize the ACI.

"We cannot freeze the establishment of a chamber in Zarqa because we are implementing the current law. But we support the proposed legislation," Dr. Mulki told the meeting.

At an ACI general assembly meeting on Sunday, industrialists agreed to form an expanded committee that would cooperate with the chamber's board

to draft a law for the creation of a "Jordan Chamber of Industry."

The controversy began when the government decided to authorize the establishment of an independent chamber of industry in Zarqa — as requested by 23 industrialists in the governorates in Zarqa and Mafrqa.

The move enraged ACI and several industrialists said the decision would harm the economy at a time when the private sector should join forces to confront challenges brought about by economic globalization.

More than 400 industrialists at Sunday's meeting agreed to unify ranks to push for the creation of the projected chamber that would encompass all their industries, currently suffering from economic recession and harmed by dismantling of customs barriers as part of international trade accords.

Despite calls to freeze the Zarqa chamber of industry, Mohammad Tal, one of the founders, told the Jordan Times Monday that the chamber plans to start operations as soon as possible under the current legislation governing the industry.

"Zarqa is the mother of all industries," he said, referring to 1,000 industries based there for decades. "And the Zarqa chamber will work independently just like ACI," he

said.

But Dr. Tal agreed that all industrial chambers in Jordan should be grouped under one unit.

However, he did not foresee that the draft law to create the Jordan Chamber of Industry will be finished soon.

The Zarqa chamber of industry, with 26 representatives, has already elected seven board members.

"Under the current law, all Zarqa-based industries should follow the Zarqa chamber," Dr. Tal said.

The ACI also won support from all industrialists at Al Hassan Industrial Estate who were planning to set up their own chamber.

At a meeting with ACI board members, Irbid-based industrialists said they back the chamber's efforts to set up a national chamber to look after their 54 industries — enjoying a free trade status on U.S. markets under a Qualifying Industrial Zone (QIZ) agreement.

Jordan and Israel, in the presence of U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, signed an agreement designating Irbid Industrial Estate as a qualifying zone at a controversial Middle East and North Africa economic conference held in Doha in November.

Under the QIZ deal, Irbid-based enterprises, making anything from tex-

tiles to electronic components, will use what some officials call "a gift that will allow their goods to penetrate U.S. markets free of customs duties without reciprocity."

During Monday's meeting with ACI board members, Dr. Mulki reviewed Jordan's economic progress during 1997.

He said industrial exports, outside the large five public companies, achieved a sizeable increase in 1997.

Referring to the annual Jordanian-Iraqi trade protocol which will be signed next Saturday, Dr. Mulki said the volume of trade with Baghdad will be fixed in a way that would not further burden the treasury.

The most important thing is for us to determine a list of commodities that could be exported to Iraq in line with U.N. resolutions," said Dr. Mulki.

He said exports to Iraq reached some \$420 million in 1997.

With reference to recommendations for exempting production inputs from customs duties, Dr. Mulki said the government is considering the priorities of lists provided for exemptions as they cannot be given all at one time.

He pointed out that discussions on this issue are underway with economists and the whole process will be sorted out over a period of four to five years.

Proud Indonesian tiger reduced to begging by economic crisis

JAKARTA (AFP) — Indonesia is reeling after a month which has left its currency devastated, its economy in tatters and has forced the world's fourth most populated country to beg the international community for help.

Shaken throughout the second half of last year by the tremors enveloping Thailand and other neighbours to the north, Indonesia thought it had already fallen victim to the economic crisis sweeping Asia.

A \$40 billion International Monetary Fund (IMF) bailout was put together, linked to wide-ranging reforms.

But it wasn't until the fast month of Ramadan was underway in early January that the country, with more than 200 million people, truly found itself in the grip of the "Asian contagion."

Amid fears over President Suharto's health, the already heavily devalued rupiah slid further against the U.S. dollar, setting a record low at the once unimaginable level of 7,700 to the greenback on Jan. 6 following a riot in the city of Bandung near here.

Later the same day, Mr. Suharto unveiled what was billed as an austere budget based on an exchange rate of 4,000 rupiah to the dollar and boosting state funding by 32 per cent in rupiah terms.

But it was widely seen as unrealistic, and the market responded by driving the rupiah down to 8,200 to the dollar the following day.

It plummeted through the 10,000 mark for the first time on Jan. 10, amid concerns Mr. Suharto was stalling on implementing the reforms that would damage the business interests of his family and friends. Panic-buying erupted across Jakarta, as residents rushed to empty supermarket shelves amid fears of shortages, prompting the military to warn it would take action against hoarders.

Challenges to Mr. Suharto's unbroken 30-year rule sprang up, with opposition figures openly blaming him for the crisis and offering themselves as candidates for office in the March presidential election.

A government bid to bolster the crashing currency, the "Love the Rupiah" campaign, was kicked off with Mr. Suharto's daughter Siti "Tutur" Hardiyanti Rukmana selling dollars.

On Jan. 12, after receiving a flurry of calls from international leaders, Mr. Suharto assured the IMF he was serious about implementing the agreed reforms, and three

days later he signed a deal agreeing to a revived bail-out.

His original budget was scrapped and replaced with one which presumed an exchange rate of 5,000 rupiah to the dollar, 20 per cent inflation and zero economic growth. Meanwhile, analysts estimate inflation has hit 25 per cent, the rupiah after a brief respite plunged again and the economy has been paralysed.

Human rights activists joined the calls for Mr. Suharto to be replaced, but his Golkar Party confirmed it would nominate the 76-year-old for a seventh five-year term. Mr. Suharto accepted.

The president and vice president for the 1998-2003 period will be chosen in March by a 1,000 strong electoral college, among whom Mr. Suharto is believed to be able to count of 875 votes.

None of his leading critics is able to stand.

Social unrest rose further as Indonesia sank deeper into the economic quagmire, and the Muslim-dominated country's ethnic Chinese minority began to fear they would again be targets as so often during times of tension here.

Indonesia's debt-burdened corporates stagnated as the situation deteriorated, awaiting government word on their place in the reforms.

Finance Minister Mar'ie Muhammad then said the government would not bail out the private sector, staggering under the weight of some \$65 billion owed to foreign lenders. The rupiah hit 16,500 to the dollar on Jan. 22, before recovering to today's level of 10,500 to 11,500.

However, the state would guarantee all bank deposits and debts, the minister added later, in a move generally welcomed by the markets.

But a government announcement also on Tuesday that the non-bank private sector would seek a de facto moratorium on repayments of billions of U.S. dollar in foreign debt sent shivers overseas.

Ratings agency Standard and Poor's immediately downgraded 17 Indonesian corporations, while rival Moody's later said there was a risk the debts may not be repaid.

Officials here said some 220 corporations would plead with international lenders to be excused from servicing their debt.

They would eventually begin meeting interest payments and later start working off the capital if the banks agreed.

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 10, 1998

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) It's a good afternoon to go shopping, if you can find the energy. It looks like you'd rather just take off early on your weekend jaunt. That could prove more expensive than you'd planned. Better check on your motel reservations and other little details.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) You're able to learn more quickly than usual. Information just sticks to your brain. So study something your boss or professor has been trying to teach you. A loved one can help. He or she may not have complete mastery of the subject yet, but the insights will be priceless.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) Handle business this morning. This evening, you're going to relax at home. A nice meal, good music and perhaps a soak in the hot tub will make this a memorable Friday night. If your sweetheart has other plans, let him or her go without you. An occasional absence does make the heart grow fonder.

CANCER: (June 22 to July 21) Conditions are hectic this morning, but you'll get the most creative work done then. Meet with friends later in the day. A party would be a good way to relax and renew your energy. In fact, it's a good weekend to party, from tonight clear through Sunday.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Your luck changes for the worse as your day progresses. There's a whole lot to do. Scan over your lists first thing this morning. Sort out those little pieces of paper in your pockets, too. A couple hours spent getting organized this morning could really save your bacon later in the day.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) This is easy, but don't get lazy. You're going to have to perform up to the standards you've already set for yourself. Better check your calendar again. If you miss this meeting, you'll be in trouble. It looks like there might be quite a bit of money involved.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) It looks like you could pull off the deal of the century if you got insider information and tried something unusual. You might be able to wrangle an unconventional loan. If you don't have somebody helping you with a real estate deal, start investigating one. He or she will most likely be a Libra. **SCORPIO:** (October 23 to November 21) You and your partner had better have a meeting this morning. You're going to have to shell out some money later in the day, so you need to agree on priorities. If either of you spends the money without the other's approval, it could make the mutual purchase impossible.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) If you push yourself hard this morning, you might get out early. It'll definitely be worth the effort. You work harder than three or four people most of the time, so why not allow yourself to relax harder than three or four people as well? Go for it.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) You'd like to spend the whole day in fascinating conversation. Instead, you're going to have to take care of business. Consider the possibilities and make the best decision. It won't be easy, but it could bring you fame as well as fortune.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) This weekend you'll be even more romantic than usual. If you don't have a sweetheart, consider somebody you've always thought of as a good friend. There might be a difference in your ages, but that's OK. It's the level of communication that counts.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) Conditions for travel look excellent through Sunday. How long has it been since you and your sweetheart had a romantic cruise? If you can't afford the princess line, a sailboat will do. If you can't even manage a rowboat, don't let that stop you. There's some sort of cruising you can do this weekend.

Birthstone of February: Amethyst — Onyx

Child labour in Africa set to soar, ILO warns

GENEVA (R) — The number of child labourers in Africa could shoot up from 80 million to 100 million by the year 2015, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) has said. In a report, the United Nations agency said Africa already had the highest incidence of child labour worldwide, with 41 per cent of children between five and 14 already at work, mainly in rural areas.

But their ranks could swell by at least one million new child workers

per year if economic and social trends persisted, ILO said in a report, "Child Labour in Africa — Targeting the Intolerable."

Evidence of exploitation and abuse is rampant, especially of girls employed in domestic service, although little data is available due to the clandestine nature of the work, it said.

The report was prepared for a three-day meeting opening on Thursday in Kampala, sponsored by the Organi-

sation of African Unity (OAU). Participants include labour ministers and representatives from employer and worker groups.

"The ILO estimates that the number of child labourers in Africa could surge from today's 80 million to over 100 million by the year 2015, as a result of a demographic explosion of impoverished people and poor or inadequate levels of economic growth across much of the continent," the ILO said.

The major factors responsible for the growth in child labour are rapid population growth, deterioration in living standards and the incapacity of education systems to cater to all children of school age and provide them with a

decent education.

Worldwide, more than 250 million children are at work, with the largest concentration in countries of Asia, the ILO said.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, nearly half the children in the 10-14 age group are working, according to the agency.

Fresh ILO estimates suggest that 27 per cent work in Benin, 51 per cent in Burkina Faso and 49 per cent in Burundi.

In Kenya, Ethiopia, Niger and Uganda the estimates range from 40-46 per cent. In Mali, 54 per cent of children are estimated to be working, while the figures range from 20 to 30 per cent in Ivory Coast, Nigeria and Zimbabwe.

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— Pit Bull (Bull Terrier) 6-month-old (male)
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THE Daily Crossword Edited by Wayne Robert Williams

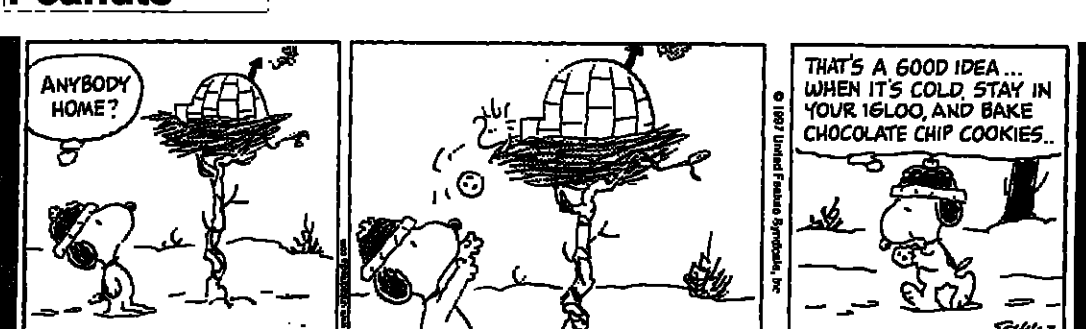
TMSPuzzles@aol.com

ACROSS
1 Swan lady
5 Cavalry weapon
10 Goody mass
14 St. crosses
15 "My Cousin Vinnie" Oscar winner
16 Part to play
17 New York nine
18 Opera songs
19 River into the Celtic
20 Yow, it's cold!
21 Absent-mindedness
23 Fully grown
25 Cart track
26 Easily led
28 Scout gathering
33 Group of eight
34 Successful treatments
35 Extremely
36 Fall short
37 Packing heat
38 British gun
39 Co-worker on "Alice"

4 Spills the beans
41 Stuffed (kitchen)
42 Capital of Chile
44 Side roads
45 Day's end, in poems
46 Mel of cartoons, e.g.
47 Can't or won't, e.g.
52 Newsman
53 Swiss capital
55 Jacob's first wife
56 South American plain
57 Costa
58 Starter chips
59 Bamboozled
60 Car tooter
61 Othello, e.g.
62 Encourages in crime
63 Millstone

DOWN
1 Gentle creature
2 Continuously
3 Disparagement
4 Blockhead
5 Horse house
6 Supremely bad
7 Leave out
8 Bring up
9 Rendered harmless
10 Cane
11 Creedance
12 Clearwater
13 Revival hit
12 Butler's brother
13 Swiss capital
21 "Lang Syne"
22 Wrigley team
24 Gauge face
26 Tips one's hat
27 City between Gainesville and Tampa
28 Extra-large
29 God of war
30 Discworld
31 Fox
32 Best and O'Brien
34 Rocky outcrop
37 "The Four Seasons" star
38 Stitched
40 Coffin platform
41 Actress
42 Cannon
43 Restraining rope
44 Blackfoot tribe
46 — Simon test
47 Litterneck or quahog, e.g.
48 Wine, prot.
49 Western
50 Night spot
51 Record
53 Tan shade
54 Blocker and Duryea
57 Pi follower

Peanuts



Andy Capp



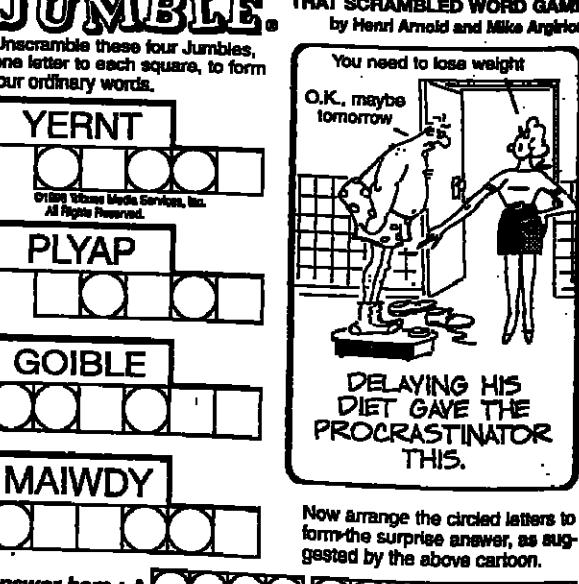
Mutt'n' Jeff



THE BETTER HALF. By Glasbergen



JUMBLE.



Yesterday's Jumbles: GASSY AGLOW HEIFER PENCIL
Answer: What the ambitious deluge looked for at the end of the day — A PILLOW CASE

Business Beat

A review of news from the Arabic Press

Tourism sector records 2.2% growth

THE NUMBER of tourists who visited Jordan last year was about 3,675,000 of whom 1,127,000 persons were on touristic visits, according to sources at the Ministry of Tourism. The sources added that the tourism sector recorded 2.20 per cent growth over the 1996 figures with earnings reaching \$775 million in 1997.

Tourists coming from American states reached 107,676 persons while the number coming from European countries was 239,411. Another 50,125 tourists came from other countries like Australia, New Zealand, Japan, Singapore, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Indonesia and Africa.

Jordan Loan Guarantee Company receives 257 applications during first half of '97

THE JORDAN Loan Guarantee Company received a total of 257 applications valued at JD4.5 million during the first half of 1997 compared to 140 applications valued at JD2.8 million during the first half of 1996. The number of applications were executed totalling 199 requests carrying a value of JD5.6 million compared to 101 requests valued at JD1.8 million during the first half of 1996.

The company received a total of 228 requests for information since it was set up in 1994 until mid-1997. The amounts granted totalled JD14.3 million but the amounts guaranteed were only JD7.8 million. The number of guaranteed and executed applications during the past three years were 522 loans for a total of JD10.2 million in granted amounts and JD5.6 million in guaranteed amounts.

About 5,500 job opportunities were created or maintained during the period (Al Ra'i).

Israel ratifies industrial zone pact with Jordan

ISRAEL RATIFIED an agreement with Jordan on Sunday to establish a free-trade industrial zone in Irbid. Industry and Trade Minister Natan Sharansky said the agreement would open the Jordanian market, as well as the entire Middle East, to Israeli products. Mr. Sharansky said that the primary purpose of the agreement, signed on Nov. 11 at a Middle East and North Africa economic conference in Qatar, was to encourage cooperation between Israeli and Jordanian companies.

thus contributing to the peace process. The pact exploits an amendment to the free-trade agreement between the United States and Israel, approved by the U.S. Congress, that allows expanding the free-trade zone to Jordan in order to advance the peace process. Another aim of the agreement is to contribute to Jordan's economic development without granting free-trade status to the entire Jordanian economy and all its products.

1998 expected to be the year of privatisation in Jordan

By Tareq Ayyoub
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Despite fierce opposition from Parliament and political parties, 1998 is expected to be the year of the much-delayed privatisation of Jordan's main profitable firms, officials said Monday.

"If no escalation in tension between Iraq and the United States occurs and no negative developments take place in the peace process, the privatisation process will be concluded very soon," said an official involved in the snail-paced privatisation process.

He declined to give the names and nationalities of firms that have joined a bid to become strategic partners in three money-making firms topping the privatisation list — the Jordan Telecommunication Company (JTC), the Jordan Cement Factories Company (JCF) and the National Oil Company (NOC).

The Executive Privatisation Unit (EPU), established last year to supervise Jordan's privatisation programme launched in the early 1990s, is expected to name the three winners "in the first few months of this year," he told the Jordan Times. Four foreign firms, two of them American, one British and one Greek, have bid to buy 40 per cent of the JTC equity, official sources said.

"The government has sent memos with all information to several foreign firms and many have responded and I believe that the process will be concluded by late April," said one source.

"Representatives from these firms have visited Jordan and verified the status of the JTC," he added. He declined to name the firms and said that three more firms were expected to join the race soon.

The source added that the EPU had sent 21 invitations to international companies to join a bid to work as financial advisors to help JCF get rid of 33 per cent of government shares and choose a strategic partner.

The EPU, which has set Feb. 28 as a deadline for

the replies, is expected to take its decision in March, said the source.

Other sources said the government had also appointed a financial advisor to help privatise the NOC — a profit-making company with proven gas reserve and untapped potential.

"Offers to buy the NOC shares should be submitted by Feb. 19 and by the end of March the decision would be taken," the source said.

The terms of reference to establish an Independent Power Producer (IPP), to generate between 300 to 350 million megawatts, with a capital of \$400m were also distributed to foreign firms to build and run the plant.

The government is also looking for foreign investors to finance and run the Dist project to transfer water from southern Jordan to several parts of the Kingdom at an expected cost of JD500 million.

"The mere offering of the country's profitable firms means that the government

is serious and aggressive in its endeavour," said one source.

Delay in choosing the strategic partners for some public sector firms was mainly because "the framework and principles of privatisation were not ready."

"Several foreign firms have submitted requests to buy equities in the public sector firms," he said. Applications were studied thoroughly and we are in the process of eliminating some of these firms from the short list."

He said that Higher Committee for Privatisation, headed by Deputy Prime Minister Jawad Anani, will choose the bidders.

But the government's privatisation endeavours are facing stiff objection from opposition parties and Parliament.

On Sunday, 48 Lower House deputies submitted a request to House speaker Sa'd Hayel Srour to stop government procedures to privatise the "profit-making firms."

And many of the opposition parties have repeated-

ly said that the government had succumbed to pressures from international financial institutions to get rid of its shares in state-owned firms under an IMF-agreed economic reform programme launched in 1989.

But the vocal pro-privatisation lobby in the country believes that the process will improve the efficiency and productivity of the public sector firm as well as introducing the modern know-how technology to the Kingdom.

Last year the government decided to establish a trust fund to keep net revenue coming from the sale of its shares under the privatisation plan.

The fund's deposits will no longer be considered part of the general budget to be used by the government.

Other loss-making firms likely to undergo gradual privatisation include Royal Jordanian, Aquila Railroad, Irbid's Electricity Company, the Public Transportation Company, a glass factory and a company for television production.

Obeidat wants coffee, rice and sugar prices lowered

By Issam Qadmani
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Mohammad Obeidat, the president of the National Consumer Protection Society (NCPS) Monday complained that agreements reached with coffee mer-

chants and the Ministry of Supply in 1995 concerning prices have not been respected.

While the coffee prices

on world markets declined, coffee prices in Jordan remained unchanged, said Dr. Obeidat.

Recalling that the public campaign for boycotting the coffee in 1995 achieved some success in that it caused the prices to drop a little, Dr. Obeidat said that the boycott campaign lasted for three months only but later the merchants again raised the prices, totally disregarding the agreements which were backed by the Ministry of Supply at the time.

He said that under the agreements, the merchants and the Ministry of Supply were to hold regular meetings every six months in order to review the prices situation, but these agreements also were ignored.

Dr. Obeidat said that the present coffee prices in Jordan do not reflect the actual prices on the world markets suggesting that the merchants should bring down the price of the best (Robusta) brand of coffee to a maximum of JD3.5 per kilogramme and the (Extra) to JD4.

Dr. Obeidat also demanded that the price of sugar and rice should also be lowered in view of the decline in prices on world markets.

Merchants selling a kilogramme of sugar for 270 fils down from the present 340 fils can guarantee up to 25 per cent profit, the NCPS chief stressed.

To find a drastic and final solution to the merchants' tampering with prices, Dr. Obeidat urged the government to speed up the enactment of a law banning monopoly and encouraging competition saying that such move would stem further manipulation of prices.

REUTERS The Business of Information

Major Currencies & Cross Rates									
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	CAD	ITL	NLG	FRF
US Dollar	1.0000	1.6164	0.6117	1.4640	124.28	1.4354	1794.00	2.0475	6.9090
DE Mark	0.6508	1.0000	0.3369	0.8058	58.45	0.7905	987.02	1.1263	3.3516
GB Sterling	1.6348	2.9676	1.0000	2.3918	203.11	2.3466	2929.00	3.3435	9.3480
CH Franc	0.6831	1.2332	0.4175	1.0000	84.87	0.8798	1224.57	139.74	4.1543
JP Yen	0.0080	0.1459	0.0031	0.0177	1.0000	0.0074	114.42	164.56	4.8931
CA Dollar	0.6967	1.2479	0.4196	1.0112	1.15	1.0000	1231.91	1.4069	4.1631
IT Lira	0.0008	0.1020	0.0031	0.0816	144.47	0.8002	1.0000	11.41	3.3928
NL Guilder	0.4884	0.8970	0.2988	0.7153	60.69	0.7012	875.98	1.0000	2.9728
FR Franc	0.1642	0.2882	0.1005	0.2453	20.40	0.2358	33.62	33.6200	1.0000

Middle Eastern Currencies									
Currency	USD	JOD	SAR	BAH	QAT	KUW	AED	LBP	EGP
US Dollar	1.0000	0.7090	3.7505	0.3770	3.6408	0.3064	3.6729	1525.00	3.3985
Jordan Dinar	1.4104	1.0000	5.2888	0.5317	5.1351	0.4307	5.1804	2156.58	4.7905
Saudi Riyal	0.2666	0.1880	1.0000	0.1005	0.97	0.0814	0.98	407.88	0.9066
Bahrain Dinar	2.65	1.8807	9.9455	1.0000	9.66	0.8101	9.74	4055.81	8.0094
Qatar Dinar	0.2747	0.1947	1.0301	1.0301	1.0000	0.8939	1.01	419.96	0.9329
Kuwait Dinar	3.2744	2.3215	12.2806	1.2344	11.82	1.0000	12.03	5006.55	0.9229
Emirates Dinar	0.2723	0.1930	1.0211	1.0211	1.0000	0.8931	1.00	416.29	0.9247
Lebanese/1000	0.65	0.4637	2.4529	0.2466	2.3812	0.1997	2.4022	1.0000	2.2214
Egyptian	0.2944	0.2087	1.1042	0.1110	1.0719	0.0899	1.0814	450.17	1.0000

Energy				
Oil	Last	Previous	Oil	Last
Brent	14.84	15.15	WTI	14.84
Brent	16.82	16.99	Brent	16.82
Brent	14.84	15.15	Brent	14.84
Dubai	12.70	12.73	Dubai	12.70
UL Gas	159.00	160.00	UL Gas	159.00

Metal Prices				
Metal	Last	Offer	Metal	Last
Gold (oz's)	301.1	301.6	Silver (oz's)	7.12
Platinum (oz's)	392	394	Al (3 Months)	1508
Al (3 Months)	1508	1510	Cu (3 Months)	1690
Cu (3 Months)	1690	1694	Zinc (3 Months)	1089
Zinc (3 Months)	1089	1092	Lead (3 Months)	631
Lead (3 Months)	631	632	Ni (3 Months)	5580
Ni (3 Months)	5580	5585		

JORDAN MARKETPLACE *** JORDAN MARKETPLACE *** JORDAN MARKETPLACE

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Jordan named MVP, still brightest of all the All-Stars

NEW YORK (AFP) — Michael Jordan didn't let Kobe Bryant steal the show, capturing his third Most Valuable Player award Sunday in what may have been his last National Basketball Association All-Star Game.

Jordan scored 23 points as the Eastern Conference routed the Western Conference 135-114 in the mid-season exhibition.

The superstar of the Chicago Bulls shook off a cold and wowed the crowd at Madison Square Garden. He won his duel with Bryant, the 19-year-old wunderkind of the Los Angeles Lakers who became the youngest All-Star starter in history and often was matched up with Jordan.

Jordan provided the same type of entertainment he has since entering the NBA in 1984 — scoring for dunks, falling away for jumpers, teasing teammates and challenging opponents. Before leaving for perhaps the final time with 1:39 to go, he attempted a free throw with his eyes closed — but missed.

It was the second All-Star MVP award in the last three games for Jordan, who had the only triple-double in All-Star history last year in Cleveland. His three MVP



Eastern Conference guard Michael Jordan of the Chicago Bulls holds up the 1998 NBA All-Star Game MVP trophy (Reuters photo)

awards again put him in select company, joining Oscar Robertson and Bob Pettit as the only players who have won three or more All-Star MVPs.

Jordan also was in the middle of a 20-1 fourth-quarter run, making a three-pointer and a coast-to-coast layup as the Eastern Conference

Jordan the spotlight.

"I was trying to fend him off as much as I could," Jordan said of Bryant. "He came at me pretty early, which I would if I was him. He attacked, you know. I like his attitude."

That doesn't mean Jordan was ready to let the kid get away with anything.

"I just wanted to make sure Kobe didn't dominate me," Jordan said. "He was biting at the bit. I was just glad that I was able to fight him off."

The East won its third straight All-Star Game and Indiana coach Larry Bird won his All-Star coaching debut.

Once he had taken care of Bryant, the 34-year-old Jordan again found himself fighting off questions about his retirement. He reiterated that he will not return to the Bulls if coach Phil Jackson doesn't.

And he said the fact that he still leads the league in scoring, with a 28.9 point average, won't affect his decision.

"This day was going to happen sooner or later," Jordan said. "I always said I would not walk out of the game limping. If I walk out of the game, I want to walk out knowing I can still play. People have to believe that."



Eastern Conference guard Michael Jordan (23) of the Chicago Bulls goes up for a basket over Western Conference center David Robinson of the San Antonio Spurs during action in the first half of the NBA All-Star game February 8 in New York's Madison Square Garden. Jordan scored 23 points, as the East won 135-114 (Reuters photo)

Graf delays comeback again

PARIS (AFP) — Steffi Graf's long awaited comeback to tournament tennis was put on hold again on Monday when she pulled out of this week's \$450,000 Paris Indoor Open with a calf muscle injury.

The former World No. 1, who has not played since last year's French Open, arrived in Paris on Sunday and had an immediate work out with Austrian Barbara Schett.

"Unfortunately after about 45 minutes into the practice I went for a ball and felt a sharp pain in my left calf," said the 28-year-old Graf, the winner of 21 Grand Slam singles titles.

"I attempted to treat it with ice and stretching and hoped I'd still be able to play. But unfortunately it's not responding quickly enough. It's a great disappointment to me since everything was going so well. The doctor says it should be better in about a week. I'm really eager to play and as soon as I can I shall be out there."

Graf, who will decide later this week if she can play in next week's WTA event in Hanover, had an operation on her left knee in June last year. She stressed that her latest setback had no connection with that injury.

The German, who has fallen to 49 in the rankings but who has a protected ranking of third in the world, returned home to Brühl in Germany immediately after failing her morning fitness test.

Graf had hoped to make her return in Tokyo last week but renewed pain from her knee made her drop out.

Jana Novotna of the Czech Republic remains the top seed for the Paris event while last year's French Open champion Iva Majoli of Croatia becomes the number-two.

At Monday's draw third-seed Mary Pierce of France could face a second-round clash with compatriot and 1996 champion Julie Halard-Decugis.

Halard-Decugis, who has returned this season after a long injury lay-off, first plays Karina Habsudova of Slovakia while Pierce has a first-round bye.

In other first-round matches, dangerous Russian teenager Anna Kournikova plays home wild-card entry Alexia Dechaume-Balleret for a second-round clash against either Alexandra Fusai of France or fifth-seeded Anke Huber of Germany.

Novotna will open her title bid against either Rita Grande of Italy or Miriam Oremans of the Netherlands.

Davenport edges closer toward World No. 1

TOKYO (AFP) — Martina Hingis may be the undisputed top women's tennis player in the world, but Lindsay Davenport proved with her weekend win in Tokyo that she is narrowing the gap on the Swiss prodigy.

"Martina is still very far away, she is still a better player, more consistent than everybody else right now," Davenport, the World No. 2, said after beating Hingis 6-3, 6-3 in the Toray Pan Pacific Open final.

"But I feel like my game has been improving, and I feel every time I go into a tournament, I have the chance to win. I didn't think so three years ago."

When Davenport came to Tokyo in 1995, she said she hoped to be at the top of her game when she was 21 or 22.

Now 21, Davenport reached her first Grand Slam semi-final at the U.S. Open last year and did it again in the Australian Open a week ago.

When she beat Hingis in straight sets in Tokyo on Sunday she narrowed the gap in their head-to-head clashes to 4-5.

"It was probably the best match I've played in my life," Davenport said. "I knew how I had to play today and the style I had to play. There are not many days you feel great and today I felt like I played great."

A series of aggressive service returns and effective approach shots were the basis for the victory by Davenport, one of the only five players to have beaten Hingis last season.

Davenport, the daughter of a U.S. Olympic volleyball player, captured her first WTA title at the European Open in Switzerland in May 1993.

The 1.89 metre Californian enjoyed her biggest moment in the limelight when she upset two-time French Open champi-

on Arantxa Sanchez Vicario of Spain to win the Atlanta Olympic gold medal in 1996.

She added her biggest WTA title so far at Indian Wells in March in a year in which she won six titles including the European indoor championships in Zurich in October.

"I have worked pretty hard for the last two years in trying to get in better shape. I knew if I got to the top of the rankings, I have to get in better shape and get a little bit faster," said Davenport.

"I did a lot of running, a lot of weightlifting to try to get a bit fitter, and it does give me a big advantage now. I can see how much of a better player I am because of that."

"I feel better about myself on the court with the shots I have. I'm in better shape with a better serve, and I think that came from working very hard to get my game better and putting in a lot of hours of training."

"I think definitely I believe in myself a lot more and that came with a lot of success last year, just a lot of success has built my confidence up a lot," said Davenport.

Hingis agrees Davenport deserves to be number two in the world and is improving.

"She is, for sure, the No. 2 player in the world right now," Hingis said after the Tokyo final.

"She has shown that she can play very well, that she also wins tournaments, not only one or two, that she can also beat everybody in the world."

"And she made the semi-finals last week in the Grand Slam. I think she is gonna be a very tough player this year or in the future," she said.

Fever thwarts Gebrselassie record bid

GHENT (AFP) — Ethiopia's Olympic 10,000 metres champion Haile Gebrselassie, who was suffering from a temperature, failed in his bid to break the world indoor 1,500 metres world record here on Sunday.

The 24-year-old triple world 10,000 metres champion won at the IAAF event in a time of 3mins 33.27secs, after Croatian Branko Zorko and Javier Moro of Spain had set the pace. That was just under two seconds slower than the record set by Morocco's world indoor and outdoor 1,500 metres champion Hicham El Guerrouj in Stuttgart last year.

Gebrselassie, who had run the fastest 1,500 metres this season in Stuttgart last Sunday, said he would try to add another world record to the 5,000 metres indoor record he holds.

"I am running a slight temperature because of the cold weather but I still intend to try for the 2,000 metres world record in Birmingham next weekend," he said.

"After that I will try and regain my 3,000 metres record from Daniel Komen (who broke it in Budapest on Friday) in Stockholm on February 19," he added.

Romania's 5,000 metres world champion Gabriela Szabo also failed in her attempt at breaking British athlete Liz McColgan's 5,000 metres world record — the World Student Games champion missing out by over four seconds in her bid to better the mark of 15:03.17 set in Birmingham in 1992.

African Nations Cup Egypt with a point to prove

BOBO-DIOULASSO, Burkina Faso (AFP) — Egypt's Hazem Emam said they had a point to prove during the African Nations Cup after being written off as no hopes in some quarters.

Egypt play their first match against Mozambique in the tough Group D here on Tuesday and Udiense midfielder Emam believed their motivation would come from negative comments from the press.

"The newspapers back home are saying we are not good enough and that we will fail. But I think we will prove them wrong," said 22-year-old Emam.

"I think in the past we have sometimes not been tough enough although we clearly had ability. Now we have a blend of technical skill and physical fitness which means we have a good chance of winning this trophy."

Many have said a team from West Africa would surely win this event because they would be the most used to the dry, desert conditions and 35-plus degree heat.

But Emam didn't agree with this. "We have a good team and I think we would do well wherever we played."

Reaching the 1998 finals proved an unexpectedly difficult task for Egypt as they had to make up five points on Senegal in the last two qualifying rounds to squeeze through.

Drawn with fierce North African rivals Morocco, Zambia and Mozambique in Group D, the Pharaohs face an uphill struggle in alien conditions just to reach the knockout phase.

Egypt are a match for any national team on the continent in Cairo, but have proved consistently poor travellers and were eliminated at the quarter-final stage of the previous two tournaments.

Warm-up matches at home last month brought mixed results with a seven-goal mauling of Togo and comfortable win over Cameroon offset by two losses to Algeria. Several players have survived from the 1996 finals in South Africa with defenders

Hani Ramzy and Samir Kamouna, midfielder Hazem Emam and striker Hosam Hassan set to occupy pivotal positions.

Mozambique enter the African Nations Cup finals a third time knowing their chances of ending a dismal record are very poor.

A surprise draw and a goal against eventual runners-up Tunisia in South Africa two years ago is all the Mambas (Snakes) have to show for two appearances at the continental showpiece.

"Mozambique is a poor country but my players have strong hearts," insists coach Amaldo Salvado as he contemplates tackling three of the strongest teams at the finals.

Despite being an impoverished nation still recovering from civil war, the football authorities have spared no effort to ensure the team is adequately prepared for the mammoth task.

They played five warm-up matches in West Africa this month, defeating Togo, holding and losing to Ghana, and falling twice to Nations Cup hosts Burkina Faso.

Guinea snatch victory over Algeria

A goal on the hour from Oulare gave Guinea a 1-0 victory over Algeria in Sunday's African Nations Cup Group A match here — but Algeria had only themselves to blame for not taking their chances.

Three minutes into the second-half Tasfaout unleashed a tremendous shot to bring a spectacular save from Guinea goalkeeper Diallo, and the Algerian striker then had another golden chance six minutes before the final whistle when he latched onto a neat through ball from his captain, Saib, only to hook his shot just over the bar.

Late substitute Fode Camara could have made it 2-0 for Guinea in the dying seconds but his shot hit the bar.

Makinen wins Swedish Rally

KARLSTAD (AFP) — Finland's dual world champion Tommi Makinen won the Swedish Rally here on Sunday, edging out Spanish driver Carlos Sainz.

The 33-year-old Mitsubishi driver, who is seeking a third successive title, came home 51 seconds ahead of Sainz, who won the season's opener in Monte Carlo. Four-time world champion Juha

Kankkunen of Finland was third, a further seven seconds in arrears.

The win was the 100th by a Finnish driver in world championship rally events.

Makinen, who also won this event in 1996, won despite a fierce charge from Toyota-driver Sainz on the final day of the Spanish

only enabled him to dislodge Ford-driver Kankkunen from second spot.

The 'Flying Finn' had taken the overall lead on Saturday's second leg when the 1994 winner Thomas

Radstrom had crashed out when leading by 32 seconds. The next stage of the world championship is the Kenyan Safari Rally from February 28 to March 2.

SCOREBOARD

African Nations Cup			
Group A			
Guinea	1	Algeria	0
Group C			
South Africa	0	Angola	0
NBA All-Star Game			
East	135	West	114
Italian Serie A			
Bari	0	Fiorentina	1
Empoli	5	Napoli	0
Inter Milan	0	Bologna	1
Juventus	3	AS Roma	1
Lazio	2	AC Milan	1
Piacenza	1	Vicenza	1
Sampdoria	2	Brescia	1
Udinese	6	Lecce	0
Atalanta	0	Parma	0
Spanish Football Championship			
Espanyol	0	Real Zaragoza	1
Real Betis	2	Merida	1
Salamanca	0	Celta Vigo	1
Valencia	1	Valladolid	2
Sporting Gijon	2	Racing Santander	1
Tenerte	1	Barcelona	1
D. La Coruna	2	Real Madrid	2
Dutch First Division			
FC Utrecht	2	Feyenoord	3
FC Volendam	1	Roda JC Kerkrade	4
RKC Waalwijk	1	Ajax Amsterdam	5
Doetinchem	1	PSV Eindhoven	2
Belgian League			
Mouscron	1	Lokeren	3
Harelbeke	0	Westerlo	0
Greek Football Championship			
Olympiakos	1	OFI	0
Kavala	1	AEK	1
Veria	0	Panathinaikos	3
Kalamata	1	PAOK	1
Ethnikos	0	Jonikos	1
Iraklis	4	Athinaikos	0
Proodefiki	0	Xanthi	3
Apollon	0	Panionios	0
Panathaiiki	0	Pyrgos	4
Bundesliga			
Wolfsburg	1	Cologne	1
Portuguese League			
Leca	1	Varzim	0
Farense	3	Belenenses	1
Campanhoreense	2	Maritimo	1
Vitoria Setubal	1	Salgueiros	3
Rio Ave	1	Boavista	1
S. Lisbon	1	V. Guimaraes	1
Sporting Braga	5	D. Chaves	0
French Cup (Round of 32)			
Bourg-Peronnas	3	Montpellier	2
Metz	1	Bastia	0
English Premiership			
Arsenal	2	Chelsea	0

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007...TOMORROW NEVER DIES		Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30		Shows: 3:00, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30		Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:00, 8:15, 10:30		Adel Imam & Yusra ... in RISALA ILA AL WALI (ARABIC)		SPEED 2		NOW ON DAILY	
Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30		THE PEACEMAKER		GEORGE OF THE JUNGLE		MR. BEAN		Shows: 6:00, 8:15, 10:30		HOME ALONE 3		THE GOVERNMENT IN THE SERVICE OF PEOPLE	
		Shows: 6:15, 8:30, 10:30		Shows: 12:00, 1:30, 5:00,		Shows: 3:30, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30				Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:30		Starring Hisham Yanes and Amal Dabbas	
												For reservations call: 640155, 625155	

The pain of the glory for Olympic skaters

NAGANO (AFP) — Figure skating is the most watched of the Winter Olympic sports and the most punishing on the body of the contenders.

Bone-jarring leaps on the ice, a clash of blades in training, freak accidents and illness have all taken their toll on the Winter Olympics.

World pairs champion Ingo Steuer cannot lift partner Mandy Woetzel without feeling a searing pain in his shoulder after he was hit by a car in December.

The 31-year-old German will probably need a new painkilling injection before Tuesday's final in the Nagano White Ring.

Elena Berezhnaya, favourite to win the Olympic pairs title with Anton Sikharulidze, still carries the physical and mental scars of a training accident two years ago when her former partner's blade cut into her left temple leaving her partially paralysed.

Their coach Tamarina Moskvina said skating was an art "and sometimes you have to suffer."

Berezhnaya needed surgery to remove bone from close to her brain and Moskvina admitted she had feared for her protégée.

The 20-year-old said she had been afraid for a couple of days. "But I have taken care of that now. That is in the past," she added.

Continual colds from training in freezing temperatures and the hazardous ice injuries are big threats to skaters as the stress of performing before judges and the biggest television audience of the Winter Olympics.

Jenni Meno, who partners Todd Sand, has been suffering with an ankle injury for months. But she said: "Everyone up here has got something wrong with them. You just have to put up with it."

Ice injuries will also play a major role in the women's title. U.S. champion Michelle Kwan knows to her cost.

She undertook a punishing training schedule after losing her national and world titles to American rival Tara Lipinski, and a stress fracture in her left foot became so bad she could not walk.

"I torture myself and put myself through all kinds of tasks," the 17-year-old Kwan said after winning the U.S. championship back from Lipinski last month.

Kwan has delayed her arrival in Nagano, partly so she can give herself more time to rest the foot.

Last season was also the toughest for 20-year-old Tanja Szewczenko of Germany, whose promising career was nearly cut short by a life-threatening illness.

As a 15-year-old Szewczenko came fourth in the European championships and was proclaimed a future world champion. But at the 1994 Lillehammer Olympics she collided with Oksana Baiul in practice causing what turned out to be the first in a string of injuries that dragged her performances down.

Szewczenko was confined to bed for much of last year two, different blood viruses. But now she is back skating at her best, having won two Champions series events and coming a close second to Lipinski in the series final in Munich in December.

"I'm fully fit and as strong now as when I was preparing for Lillehammer, maybe even stronger," she said. "No-one will know how good that feels."



Bruno Reuteler of Switzerland soars above the Olympic rings during the second day of training for the K90 ski jump event. The training was interrupted several times due to high winds. The K90 jumping competition is scheduled to take place on February 11 (Reuters photo)



USA's Casey FitzRandolph tucks in tight as he competes in the first race of the Olympic speed skating men's 500 metres at the M-Wave stadium. FitzRandolph finished in second place with a time of 35.81 seconds. The final of the event will be held on February 10 with Japan's Hiroyasu Shimizu leading the competition after the first race (Reuters photo)



Bulgaria's Ekaterina Dafovska kisses her Olympic gold medal at the medal ceremony in Nagano. Dafovska became the first Bulgarian to win a Winter Olympic Gold medal when she won the women's 15km Biathlon earlier in the day (Reuters photo)

Nagano Winter Olympics German wins men's luge, Bulgarian victorious in biathlon

NAGANO (AP) — Germany's Georg Hackl steered his sled into the history books Monday, winning his third straight Olympic luge gold on a day when heavy snowfall again caused havoc with the Games' schedule.

The biggest casualty of the weather was Bjorn Daeblie, choosing the wrong wax for the fresh snow and seeing his search for Olympic history go astray in a winter storm during the 30-kilometre cross-country race.

The Norwegian star finished 20th in a race won by Finland's Mika Myllylä. Keeping her gun on target through a veil of flakes, Yekaterina Dafovska won the 15-kilometre biathlon, the first winter gold medal for Bulgaria.

Hackl, 31, won with consummate ease, finishing fastest in all four runs over two days in the ice chute. Silver medalist Armin Zöggeler of Italy finished a half-second slower, and Germany's Jens Mueller earned bronze.

Hackl's victories in the 1992 Albertville and 1994 Lillehammer Games were epic battles with Markus Prock, but this time the Austrian faded outside the medals into fourth place.

With his win, Hackl became the sixth member of an elite group of Winter Games athletes who have won gold at three games in a row, including figure skaters Sonia Henie of Norway and Irina Rodnina of the Soviet Union and speedskater Bonnie Blair of the United States.

Hackl is hardly as dominating during regular World Cup competition, but he's unbeatable at the Olympics. "I'm preparing years, and years for one big event," he said.



Germany's Georg Hackl listens to his country's national anthem after receiving the gold medal for his victorious men's luge race. Hackl made luge history when he became the first man to win the men's singles title at three consecutive Games (Reuters photo)

His three straight gold medal prove it.

In the medal standings, Germany took an early lead with three medals, including one gold and two bronze. Italy also has three — two silvers and a bronze. Host Japan has yet to earn a medal but speedskater Hiroyasu Shimizu is in prime position to clinch the first one Tuesday after setting an Olympic record in the first of two 500s.

Dutch favourite Jan Bos stumbled out of contention. Norway's Daeblie had been favoured to clinch the 30k cross-country to clinch an unprecedented sixth winter games' gold medal, but it was the Finn's day.

Another Norwegian, Erling Jeune, took the silver and Italy's Silvio Fauner won the bronze.

"Life goes on," said Daeblie, who is entered in

four more Olympic races to seek gold.

At higher elevations, the Olympics could not get going. snowfall forced the postponement of the women's snowboard giant slalom finals and the men's combined slalom for at least a day.

The snow that wiped out the men's downhill on Sunday continued through the night and into the morning, dropping more than 30 centimetres of snow on the Happono course.

Daeblie's slump was the second cross-country disappointment in as many days for Norway, the dominant force in Lillehammer four years ago. Norwegians finished 1-2 in the 30k race in Lillehammer. Norwegian women had hoped to sweep Sunday's 15k race but only ended up with a bronze.

Apart from Daeblie, the World's No. 1 cross-country racer, Thomas Algaard, also disappointed. Norwegian hopes, failing to finish the race.

The biathlon victory by

Bulgaria's Dafovska was a big surprise.

She refused to be unsettled by the snow and gusting winds and humbled the world's best to capture the skiing and shooting event.

"I had dreamed about hearing the Bulgarian anthem at the Olympics one day. I didn't realise it would come so soon," said Dafovska. The silver went to another middle-ranked biathlete, Elena Petrova of the Ukraine, while 1994 Olympic bronze medalist, Ursula Dist of Germany, repeated her third place.

Russian pair skaters Artur Dmitriev and Oksana Kazakova will go into Tuesday night's free program with a lead from the short program. They were one of only five couples among 20 to hit side-by-side triple jumps on a sloppy opening night Sunday.

World champions Mandy Woetzel and Ingo Steuer of Germany stood second and favourites Yelena Berezhnaya and Anton Sikharulidze of Russia were third.

Australian open champions head for Dubai

WHILE MANY tennis fans spent thousands of dollars flying to Australia to watch the best players in the world perform at the Australian Open, Dubai fans can simply go to the Dubai Tennis Stadium starting Feb. 9 and the players will come to them.

"We are proud to be acting as hosts to many of the players who made headlines at the first Grand Slam of the year," said Colm McLoughlin, Managing Director, Dubai Duty Free.

Both old friend Petr Korda, who has participated in the Dubai Tennis Open three times, and new face Marcelo Rios will be taking part in the ATP Tour World Series tournament after facing each other off in the final of the Australian Open.

Korda's ultimate and easy win in Melbourne has rocketed the 30 year old up the rankings from a respectable 13 at the end of 1997 to an elevated position as No. 2 in the world.

It is not only in singles that Dubai-bound stars have been lifting the winner's cup. No. 1 Swede Jonas Bjorkman claimed the Australian Open doubles crown with partner Jacco Eltingh, scoring a great victory over the famous

Woodies, Todd Woodbridge and Mark Woodforde.

Among the large contingent of Spaniards returning to Dubai this year, will be the diminutive Alberto Berasategui, who could have been labelled a party spoiler by the Australian crowd after he banished U.S. Open champion and local favourite Patrick Rafter and Andre Agassi before him.

It was there that Berasategui finally ran out of steam and was beaten by another in-form Dubai bound player — Marcelo Rios.

Hicham Arazi, born in Morocco and raised in France, stunned big-serving Mark Philippoussis on his way to a fourth showdown with Pete Sampras. Although losing to the World No. 1 in three tight sets, Arazi held set points and drew considerable praise from Sampras who compared him to Michael Chang.

Nicolas Kiefer, Germany's new tennis hope also demonstrated that he is a star of the future by reaching the quarter-finals of the Australian Open this year before succumbing to Frenchman Nicolas Escude.

Invitation for Pre-Qualification of Contractors For the Construction of Integrated Development Project for the Southern Ghors

(Extension of Time)
Reference is made to the Announcement in local newspaper on 2nd February, 1998 regarding the invitation for Pre-Qualification of Contractors for the Construction of Integrated Development Project for the Southern Ghors. The time for the purchase of the pre-qualification documents has been extended to February 17th, 1998 instead of February 10th, 1998. Accordingly item No. 5 of the above referenced Announcement shall read as follows:

"5. The deadline set for the purchase of pre-qualification documents shall be on February, 17th, 1998."

Jordan Valley Authority
Secretary General
Dr. Dureid Mahasneh
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Special Committee for
The Mujib and Southern Ghors Project Address:
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SAMEH MADANI
MANAGING DIRECTOR

URGENCY

The American Embassy in Amman has a vacancy for a senior Economic/Commercial Specialist to act as principal advisor on economic and commercial matters, gather and analyze macroeconomic data from public and private sectors, and draft reports. (Requirements: B.A./B.S. degree in Economics, Marketing, or Business Administration; three years in a position requiring economic analysis, fluency in spoken and written Arabic and English; ability to draft concise analytical reports; and good representational skills).

Only qualified applicants should submit an application form (available at the Embassy gate) to the Personnel Office prior to February 22, 1998.

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If names are not re-registered within 2 months, the Embassy will consider those persons have left Jordan and their names will be deleted from the Embassy register.

The Australian Embassy is located in Jabal Amman, between 4th & 5th Circles next to the Ministry of Social Development.
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Business Hours: 07:30 - 14:30
Sunday to Thursday
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U.S. blocks Russian deputies' humanitarian flight to Baghdad

Combined agency dispatches

THE UNITED STATES has blocked authorisation in the U.N. Sanctions Committee for a flight to Baghdad by 100 Russian deputies and journalists. Western diplomats said Monday.

A Western diplomat on the 15-nation Sanctions Committee said that Washington "put a hold on the flight" on Friday on grounds that it was not of an urgent humanitarian nature.

The U.S. said that there would be no objection if the delegation travelled to Baghdad by land, however.

Iran has meanwhile refused

overflight permission to the aircraft, which was held up in the Armenian capital on Monday with Russian ultra-nationalist leader Vladimir Zhirinovskiy and over 100 deputies and journalists on board, according to diplomats here.

Russian diplomats here argued that Russia only needed to notify the U.N. Sanctions Committee of the flight, and that permission was not required under "no objection" procedures which enable delegations to block decisions.

However, the U.N. legal office decided that traditional practice was for the Sanctions Committee authorisation to be sought.

"Bilateral contacts are underway to resolve the issue," U.N. spokesman Fred Eckhard said Monday at a news conference. He noted that Mr. Zhirinovskiy's flight had originally been expected in Baghdad on Tuesday.

The Russian-built Il-76, carrying up to 15 tonnes of humanitarian aid according to Russian sources, spent Sunday on the tarmac at Moscow airport after failing to secure U.N. authorisation to fly into Baghdad.

The aircraft, carrying 57 deputies from the State Duma, the lower house of the Russian parliament, and 73 journalists, eventually took off late Sunday

for Yerevan.

Neighbouring Azerbaijan and Iran have refused to grant the aircraft permission to overfly their territory unless U.N. approval is secured in advance.

The Russian deputies were planning to meet the Iranian ambassador in Yerevan later Monday in a bid to gain clearance from Tehran for the flight to Baghdad.

"Iran is ready to cooperate with the sending of the Russian aid to the Iraqi population within the framework of the U.N. decisions," said Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Mahmoud Mohammadi in Tehran, the IRNA news agency reported.

Israel calls Palestinian pro-Iraqi demonstrations 'great mistake'

RAMALLAH (AFP) — Hundreds of Palestinians demonstrated Monday in favour of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein, calling on him to fire chemical weapons on Israel and chanting "Death to America."

Israeli leaders warned the Palestinians they were making a "great mistake" in showing support for a sworn enemy of the Jewish state and said pro-Saddam demonstrations could further jeopardise Israeli-Palestinian peace talks.

Some 500 protesters in the West Bank city of Ramallah burned dozens of Israeli and U.S. flags as many shouted "Hit Israel with chemical weapons, Saddam" and "Our blood, our soul is sacrificed for Saddam."

After the demonstration, about 100 youths sneaked around a Palestinian police blockade to an Israeli checkpoint where they threw stones at soldiers and burned tires. In the West Bank city of Jenin, around 1,000 demonstrators chanted "Death to America, Death to [U.S. President Bill] Clinton, Death to [British Prime Minister Tony] Blair."

Protesters called on the United States to refrain from carrying out threatened air

strikes against Iraq in the showdown over U.N. weapons inspections.

Another pro-Iraq demonstration was planned later Monday in Gaza Strip. The rallies were organised by various organisations, including the Fatah faction of the PLO.

The Palestinian National Authority (PNA) however played no open role in the demonstrations.

The U.S. backed by Britain, has threatened punishing air strikes against Iraq unless President Hussein stops barring U.N. inspectors from sites suspected of hiding long-range missiles and chemical and biological arms.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu lashed out Monday at the Palestinian shows of support for Iraq, a fierce opponent of the Jewish state.

"The Palestinians have to decide whether they want to live in peace with Israel or support Saddam," he said.

Mr. Netanyahu said the Palestinian protests brought back "bad memories" of the 1991 Gulf war when Palestinian rejoiced at Iraqi missile attacks on Tel Aviv which killed two people and injured hundreds.

Israeli Defence Minister

Yitzhak Mordechai said Monday that the Palestinians were making a "great mistake" in supporting Iraq at a time when most Arab states have joined in pressuring the Iraqi president to obey U.N. demands.

Ramallah demonstrators said they hoped President would retaliate against Israel in the event of a U.S. strike because the Jewish state has not honoured its peace agreements with the Palestinians.

"To hell with the peace process," said Muhammad, 16, who refused to give his last name. "Where is it? It doesn't exist anymore."

Protesters accused the U.S. of hypocrisy in insisting Iraq fully respect U.N. disarmament resolutions while not demanding that Israel honour its agreements.

Israeli officials quoted in the Israeli press Monday said the PNA was behind the demonstrations although Palestinian officials said publicly only that they hoped for a peaceful solution to the Gulf crisis.

"I hope this tension with Iraq will end very soon and we will find a diplomatic solution and not a military one," PNA General-Secretary Ahmad Abdul Rahman said Monday.

Assad removes brother as vice president

DAMASCUS (AFP) — Syrian President Hafez Assad has stripped his youngest brother, Rifaat Assad, of his post as one of the country's three vice presidents, Syrian officials said Monday.

President Assad issued a decree on Sunday removing Rifaat Assad from the post, the officials said. No explanation was given for the move.

Rifaat Assad, 60, is the youngest brother of the Syrian leader and was named commander in 1974 of an elite unit of the Syrian army.

He was named a vice president responsible for military and national security affairs on March 11, 1984.

The other two vice presidents are Abdul Halim Khaddam (political and foreign affairs) and Zuhair Masharqa (internal and party affairs).

Rifaat Assad left Syria in 1984 and spent time in Paris, Geneva and Madrid before returning to the country in 1992 following the death of his mother, Nafisa.

Clinton lawyers take sex scandal prosecutor to court over leaks

WASHINGTON (AFP) — Lawyers for U.S. President Bill Clinton on Monday sought to stanch the flow of sordid details spilling out of the White House intern sex scandal by taking the prosecutor to court over the leaks.

"It's not now so much a political issue as it has become a legal issue," White House spokesman Joe Lockhart said as Mr. Clinton's lawyer prepared to take his complaint to court.

Attorney David Kendall was expected to file a complaint against independent investigator Kenneth Starr in a federal court here Monday.

Though the complaint will be sealed, Mr. Lockhart said it was likely to include a call for an investigation and possible sanctions on Mr. Starr.

Mr. Starr, a Republican who also is investigating Whitewater and other White House affairs, is leading the investigation into allegations the president had an affair with Monica Lewinsky and sought to cover it up.

Mr. Starr has denied the affair but has refused to comment on the nature of his relationship with Ms. Lewinsky, who began working as an intern at the White House in 1995 at age 21.

Mr. Starr is also under attack from Ms. Lewinsky's lawyer, William Ginsburg, who vowed to take Mr. Starr to court to enforce an immunity agreement for his client.

Writing in Time magazine, Mr. Ginsburg said Mr. Starr reneged on a deal to give Ms. Lewinsky immunity from perjury charges if she testified on her alleged sexual relationship with Mr. Clinton.

Mr. Ginsburg said Mr. Starr's office sent him a letter of agreement on the immunity deal Feb. 2, then pulled the offer two days later.

"So this week we plan to file a motion in court to enforce the agreement. This was a binding agreement that they sent us in writing," he wrote.



AN INDONESIAN QUESTION OF MONEY: Riot police guard a protester flashing rupiah notes outside Jakarta's Central Bank building Monday. Some 300 demonstrators, mostly supporters of popular opposition figure Megawati Sukarnoputri held a demonstration at the heavily guarded Jakarta's Central Bank headquarters protesting at the instability of the rupiah currency and demanding Indonesian President Suharto to step down (AFP photo)

European mission stonewalled; Algiers demands anti-terror help

ALGIERS (AP) — European lawmakers met with more of their Algerian counterparts Monday after getting a cool reception when asking about disappearances during a 6-year-old Islamist insurgency.

The Algerian lawmakers instead asked help to battle the rebels by cutting off sources of foreign cash and arms used in their drive to bring down the military-backed government of this petroleum-rich nation.

The nine-member fact-finding mission from the European Parliament, which arrived Sunday on a five-day visit, was to gather information on the insurgency in the wake of massacres last month that left hundreds dead. Some reports have linked troops to the slayings.

During a meeting Sunday night with Algerian lawmakers, a Belgian member of the mission, Anne-Andree Leonard, asked about missing Algerians in the conflict.

But Abdelkader Hadjar, head of the foreign affairs commission of the National Popular Assembly dominated by pro-government parties, refused to accept a list of the missing

from Ms. Leonard.

Instead, Mr. Hadjar suggested the list be sent "by official diplomatic means" to Algerian human rights organisations, one of which is official.

So far, Algerian authorities had yet to approve requests by the delegation to tour violence-prone areas. On Sunday, the authorities rejected a trip to massacre sites.

Mr. Hadjar instead asked that "the embargo on anti-terrorist technology be lifted," referring to arms the West has avoided selling to the Algerians.

He also asked an investigation "on the networks of support and finance of terrorism" in Europe. He called the talks with the lawmakers "a step toward concrete results."

The fact-finding mission came a month after an inconclusive visit by European Union governments. The envoys this week planned to meet with a cross-section of politicians, human rights and feminist groups, as well as relatives of massacre victims.

The delegation includes Germany's Green Party member Daniel Cohn-Bendit,

known for suggesting foreign intervention to protect Algerian civilians. Other countries include Austria, France, Spain and Greece.

Algeria's government has firmly rejected any attempt by foreign governments to interfere. Algeria has long been sensitive to foreign influence, especially to that of Paris, after wresting itself from France in 1962.

Critics of the Algerian government, however, call the stand a smokescreen to avoid a probe that could link the army to at least a passive role in the killings.

On the eve of the latest European foray, Algerian Prime Minister Ahmad Ouyahia reiterated his "rejection of any foreign interference."

According to Algiers, 26,536 people have been killed and 21,000 injured since an Islamist insurgency began six years ago. Press and hospital sources put the figure at 75,000 since 1992 elections which the now-outlawed Islamic Salvation Front was seen to win.

Cyprus gears up for presidential runoff

NICOSIA (R) — Incumbent conservative President Glafcos Clerides will face independent challenger George Iakovou as Cyprus gears up for a repeat presidential election on Feb. 15 after an inconclusive first round on Sunday.

Former Foreign Minister Iakovou edged ahead with 40.6 per cent of the vote from 447,000 registered voters, just half a percentage point ahead of Mr. Clerides' showing of 40.1 per cent.

Both candidates said they would seek cooperation from some or all of the other five presidential candidates left trailing behind in Sunday's closely fought election.

Seven hopefuls had wooed the electorate with promises of doing a better job to resolve the decades-old logjam of Cyprus's division and steer the island closer towards European Union membership.

Cyprus, divided after a Turkish invasion in 1974 following a brief Greek-inspired coup, is due to start entry talks with the 15-member bloc in April.

The election is seen as crucial to the fate of a U.N.-led initiative to resume long-stalled talks between estranged Greek and Turkish Cypriots in reuniting their island.

Mr. Clerides and Mr. Iakovou stopped short of claiming victory.

"From tomorrow [Monday] I start efforts to form a national unity government," an unusually glum Clerides, 78, told reporters.

Socialist leader Vassos Lyssarides, who garnered an unexpected high 10.6 per cent with his own presidential bid, is emerging as the obvious target for both candidates.

Aware that he can swing the election either way, Mr. Lyssarides has been tight-lipped on who his party will support in the political haggling expected in the countdown to the runoff.

But he made a point of stressing in his slick campaign that any cooperation will be on his terms, which are not negotiable.

The mass-selling daily Philoephros reported his party was due to meet later Monday to assess the outcome of the polls.

A bland technocrat and former foreign minister, Mr. Iakovou, 59, has accused Mr. Clerides administration of inconsistent policies that have rendered a solution to the Cyprus conflict more elusive than ever.

Backed by the ideologically distant communist party Akel and the centre-right Democratic Party, Mr. Iakovou was running on a platform of bringing fresh ideas to solve the Cyprus issue.

But political analysts said his bid failed to muster the combined strength of the two parties — which based on some preliminary estimates should have been in excess of 44 per cent.

Independent candidate Alexis Galanos, the Democratic Party rebel who failed to toe the party line and back Mr. Iakovou, got 4.0 per cent of the vote, poached from equally disgruntled party supporters.

With the backing of the Democratic Party, seen as hardline on the Cyprus issue, foreign analysts say Mr. Iakovou could be less amenable to compromise.

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Lawyer sues

Clinton for damages to children's morals

CAIRO (AFP) — An Egyptian lawyer is seeking one billion dollars in damages from President Bill Clinton, claiming the latter's "sexual antics" could harm his children's morals. "I don't know what to tell my children when they keep asking me to explain Clinton's sex scandals published in the press," said Mustafa Raslan. "That's why I've taken legal action and am demanding damages and interest to the tune of a billion dollars from the White House chief," he told AFP.

Australian

camel racing saga of beauty and beast

SYDNEY (R) — Camels are not pretty, and racing them is hardly glamorous, but a group of Australian women are hoping to change all that. The young women, with the help of the United Arab Emirates' best camel handlers, plan to improve the image of the obnoxious camel — an animal that spits and kicks and has a body odour problem. The Australian Camel Racing Association has advertised for "attractive" female jockeys aged 18 to 25 with the aim, Association President Kevin Handley says, to destroy the image of Australian camel racers as "bearded, backward boozers" and that of the camel as an "untrustworthy, stinking and arrogant" animal.

Van Damme

gets slammed in topless bar

NEW YORK (AFP) — Belgian kick-boxing movie hero Jean-Claude Van Damme got a knock-out punch from a former bodyguard in a popular topless nightclub here, the New York Post reported. Van Damme — dubbed "The Muscles from Brussels" — was at the Scores nightclub with a group of friends including actor Mickey Rourke late Thursday when he got into an argument with former employee Chuck Zito. Zito, who now works in the movie and television business, concluded the argument with a single punch that put Van Damme on the carpet. Van Damme managed to leave the nightclub on his own steam, signing autographs on the way out.

Barbie discovers the delights of girl power

LONDON (R) — Barbie has discovered the delights of girl power and is off clubbing with beads in her hair. She has a new look for the nineties and is off to work as dentist. "It is ultimate girl power," said Cheryl Sloan, products manager at Mattel Inc who have given Barbie her first new makeover since 1977.

American girls now own an average of 10 Barbies each. "She is a career girl who is beautiful, has lots of friends and can do everything," Sloan said. The marketing echoed the appeal of the Spice Girls, who model themselves on former Premier Margaret Thatcher and preach "girl power" as their credo.

Day-Lewis has future as a boxer

LONDON (AFP) — Daniel Day-Lewis pulled no punches preparing for his latest role in "The Boxer," in which he plays an IRA prisoner who turns to boxing on his release from prison. He trained so hard to capture the harsh reality of life in the ring that his tutor, former world boxing champion Barry McGuigan, reckons he's easily among Britain's top 20 middleweights. "The Boxer," which also stars Emily Watson — who won acclaim last year in "Breaking The Waves" — opens the Berlinale film festival on Wednesday.

Results of the

Jordan times

Car Competition for 1997

Winner of the Grand Prize: Suzuki Baleno Car:

Evelyn Maddock — Ain Al Basha

Other Winners

1. Cindy Mansur — Amman (Free ticket Amman-Athens-Amman provided by Royal Jordanian).
2. Seumi Nomura Arafat — Amman (20" Television set).
3. Awad S.H. Hussein — Irbid (Video set)
4. Tawfiq Ahmad Al Shwabkeh — Madaba (Stereo set).
5. Nazrul-Mozibur Rahman — Amman (Vacuum cleaner).
6. Yazid Qusous — Amman (One year subscription to the Jordan Times).
7. Laith E. Haddad — Amman (Seven-month subscription to the Jordan Times).
8. Mahmoud Ziad Mahimoud — Madaba, Al Arish (Three-month subscription to the Jordan Times).

Winners are kindly requested to call at the Public Relations Office at the Jordan Press Foundation on Saturday, Feb. 14, during office hours to receive their prizes.